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Resocializing and Repairing Homies within the Texas Prison System: A Case Study
on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang
Renunciation and Safety for All

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System: A Case Study on Security Threat Group
Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang
Renunciation and Safety for All**

by

Michelle Lynn Burman, B.A.; M.S.S.W.

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Resocializing and Repairing Homies within the Texas Prison System: A Case Study on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang Renunciation and Safety for All

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Michelle Lynn Burman, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Michael Lauderdale

This research is a case study focused on the resocialization of prison gang members through the lens of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's (TDCJ) Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) process, a nine-month, three-phase voluntary process whereby confirmed prison gang, or Security Threat Group (STG), members renounce their gang membership and disassociate from the gang while still incarcerated. The TDCJ implemented its gang renunciation process to relinquish its dependence on segregating confirmed prison gang members and to provide them a way to transition out of segregation. The GRAD process has been in place since 2000 with more than 2,600 offenders completing it, but little information, other than anecdotal

evidence, is available to support or disprove its success or effectiveness at degang and resocializing prison gang members for the long haul.

Interviews were conducted with 16 individuals, including GRAD correctional officers and instructors, and law enforcement officers with known expertise and knowledge of prison gang investigations. A limited amount of extant aggregate-level data was provided by TDCJ to supplement the narratives in the qualitative analysis.

Findings suggest that the identified goals of the process differ among GRAD staff and non-GRAD staff: GRAD staff focused on offender rehabilitation, and non-GRAD staff focused on gang renunciation. It was also found that resocialization and normative change can and do occur in the closed GRAD environment; however, no tracking mechanism exists to systematically and proactively monitor their behavior once they are released from GRAD to determine if they have internalized these new norms and values. Based on the interviews, it also appears that the length of time spent in segregation prior to renunciation renders the offender more grateful and appreciative, and, therefore, more likely to successfully complete the process. Finally, interviews with law enforcement reveal that, upon release to the broader community, these offenders may have renounced the gang – but not the crime.

The dissertation ends with limitations to the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for social work.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Preface	1
Glossary of Terms.....	2
Introduction	9
Problem Statement	12
Purpose of the Study	14
A Spoonful of Gang Renunciation: A Taste of TDCJ's GRAD Process	16
Research Questions	17
Relevance to Social Work.....	19
Implications for Social Work.....	23
Dissertation Roadmap	24
A Very Abridged History of the U.S. Prison System.....	26
Purpose and Goals of the Criminal Justice System and Incarceration	29
The Present from the Past: Evolution from Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) to Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)	37
Contemporary TDCJ Demographics	38
The Building Tender System and the Pre- <i>Ruiz</i> Era: Nothing Tender About It.....	41
Post- <i>Ruiz</i> : The Vacuum Cometh	46
The Vacuum Arriveth: Cleaning House.....	49
Post- <i>Ruiz</i> Examination: Monday Morning Quarterbacking.....	52
Building Tenders: Prison Relic or Reincarnation?.....	54
Institutional Context	55
Summary	56
Chapter 2: Literature Review	57
Gangs in General: Street versus Prison.....	58

Prison Gang Research: The “Where’s Waldo” of Empirical Study	61
Level of Violence and Violence Attributed to Prison Gangs	62
Generation Gap: Age of Offender	69
Race and Ethnicity	73
Prison Gang Belief System: Perpendicular Moral Universe	77
Protection.....	78
Respect.....	80
Blood In, Blood Out.....	80
“It’s Not Personal, Just Business”: The Prison Gang’s Concept of Loyalty	83
Recruitment	84
Fear of the Unknown and Too Much Popular Prison Media	85
The Impact of Race and Manipulative Recruitment	85
Youthful Offenders with Longer Sentences: The Perfect Storm for Maximizing Recruitment	86
Physical Design of the Facility	88
“Really, It’s Just Business”: Entrepreneurial Spirit with a Twist	88
Connections to Mexican Drug Cartels: Opportunity for Even Greater Financial Gain	92
Prison Gangs as Bureaucracies	100
Tangos: The Next Generation Is Already Here (or “What If Prison Gangs and Street Gangs Had a Baby”)	101
General Prison Gang Management Policy and Administrative Responses to Security Threat Groups	105
Definition of a Security Threat Group.....	105
Security Threat Group Development	109
Classifying Security Threat Groups and Validating Security Threat Group Members.....	111

STG Management Office (STGMO) Organization in TDCJ.....	111
TDCJ and STG Member Validation	114
An Exercise in Comparative Validation: California versus Texas	116
Prison Administration Responses to Prison Gangs	119
Administrative Segregation: “Is Ad Seg a Program or a Place?”	124
Financial Cost of Segregation.....	126
Constitutionality of Ad Seg for Prison Gang Members	127
Necessity of Ad Seg, But for Whom?.....	128
Unintended Consequences of Segregating STG Members ...	129
Lack of Available Programming	129
Extended Family and Communication	136
Isolation Fosters Cohesion	138
Reinforces Identity as Gang Member and Promotes Solidarity among Homies.....	140
Giving Gang Members a Second Chance: “Who Gave Them Their First?”	142
Release from Segregation: How Fare Thee Well.....	144
We Don’t Need No Stinkin’ Correctional Theory, or Do We: The Theory Behind the Process	148
Theory.....	149
Institutional Context: Seeing Beyond the Individual	150
“The Code of the Streets”: Guidelines for a Correct Gangster Response.....	155
Inmate Culture and Prisonization	160
Code of the Street Exported from and Imported to Prison	161
Models of Inmate Behavior: How to Get Here from There	161
Prisonization: Prison and Prisoners’ Community	166

Group Formation: Primary Group and Peer Influence	170
Inmate Frustration: Precursor to Prisonization?.....	171
The Dissenting Opinion: No Hostile Takeover by Prison Culture	173
Convict Code: The Rule Book for Prison Life.....	173
The Core Tenets of the Convict Code	175
Administrative Culture: Dances with Inmates.....	180
Correctional Officers versus Inmates	181
“Culture Clash” of the Titans	184
Correctional Officers versus Helping Professionals	186
Culture of Individual Facilities: If You Build It, They Will Come, But How Will They Leave?	188
The Way of the Warden	189
Culture Conflict: The Intersection of the Codes of the Street, Gang and Prison	191
"Biculturalism": Buying into a Culture, But Which One? ..	191
Culture Conflict: Internal Battle of the Criminal Brawn ...	196
Resocialization in Prison.....	199
Rehabilitation versus Resocialization	199
Should We Expect Resocialization to Work in Prison? ..	202
Conditions Conducive to Resocialization	203
Perception of Self and Others: Transforming Resocialization into “Transformation”	205
“Exiting Deviance”: Do All Resocialized Things Come to Those Who Wait?	209
The (Im-)Plausibility and (Im-)Possibility of Resocialization: De-ganging Gangsters and Obstacles to Resocialization in Prison.....	210
Good Morning, You’re Still in Prison	211
Summary	213

Chapter 3: TDCJ's Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) Process	215
Renunciation: First Step or Final Leap toward Resocialization?	215
GRAD Mission Statement	215
Eligibility Criteria and Offender Introduction to the GRAD Process	217
De-ganging Gangsters in Nine Months: The Three Trimesters of GRAD and the Birth of an Ex-Gangster	221
Phase I.....	222
Phase II.....	225
Phase II Curriculum: Cognitive Intervention (Imprisoned by Thoughts and Beliefs)	226
Phase II Curriculum: Substance Abuse Education, Anger Management Skills, and the Criminal Addictive Behavior Cycle	228
Curriculum Influx: Movies, Role Plays and Journals, Oh My	229
Phase III.....	232
Color-Coded Phases: Bands Band Us Together	233
Target Population	234
Who's on First: Release Date, Time in Ad Seg, or Membership Rank	234
GRAD Completion Ceremony: Validation for the Newly Ex-Validated	241
Post-GRAD Work: Returning to General Population with an Advanced Prison Education.....	244
Prisoner Reentry: Straddling the Fence and Taking the First Step into General Population	244
Where Offenders End Up After GRADuation to Maximize Success	245
GRAD as Management Strategy: Making GRAD Completers Work for TDCJ.....	246
Unexpected Allies	248

Risks to Renunciation	250
Should Gang Renunciation Programs Be Mandatory? ..	250
Compromising the Safety of Exes?	252
To Snitch or Not to Snitch: Is That the Question?	253
Ad Seg and the Threat of a Return to Solitary as Sufficient Deterrent?	255
But Does GRAD Work: The Need for Program Evaluation and GRAD as Management Strategy	256
Program Expansion and Potential Obstacles.....	261
Show Me the Money	261
Organizational Resistance to Change	263
Employee Attitudes and Expectation of Change	264
Improved Employee Training	268
Overcoming Skepticism and Battling the Demon Within: Administrative Culture and Its Effect on GRAD's Longevity	269
Just Because We Say You Are an Ex-Prison Gang Member Doesn't Make You an Ex-Prisoner.....	271
Need for Aftercare In and Out of Prison.....	272
GRAD and the Parole-Bound: Expansion to Parole?.....	273
Establish Gang-Free Units.....	273
Summary	276
Chapter 4: Methods and Data Collection	278
The Prison Setting: Doing Time and Doing Research.....	278
Gaining Access: If You Let Me In, Will You Promise to Let Me Out?	279
Obstacles to Prison Research	280
Benefits to Participating in Prison Research	282
The Research Questions Revisited	283
Other Duties as Assigned: Developing a Line of Inquiry	284
Why a Case Study?	286

Data Analysis Plan.....	288
Data Collection	289
Timeline: Getting In and Getting Out in a Politically Tumultuous Era	289
Participant Selection: The Power of the Personal.....	290
Interview Protocol: Cross the T and Dot the I	293
Human Subjects Protection and Anonymity of Participants: Security Is Paramount	296
Sources of Evidence.....	297
Triangulation: Validation by Triangle.....	301
Qualitative Data Analysis.....	303
Quantitative Data Analysis.....	304
Limitations.....	305
Reflexivity	305
The Data Itself	306
Summary	308
Chapter 5: Findings.....	309
The Research Questions: Once More with Feeling	309
Security Threat Group Statistics	311
Gang Violence in Texas Prisons.....	311
Ad Seg as STG Management Tool	313
TDCJ STG Trend Data (2004-2011).....	314
Profile of Interviewees.....	318
Staff Recruitment	319
Subtle Differences Between Teachers and Counselors.....	321
Snapshot of GRAD Classes Graduating in January 2012.....	323
Defining GRAD Success: Exactly What Are We Doing, and Are We Doing It?.....	325
GRAD Goals: Different Perspectives Based on Assignment .	325
Teachers and Counselors.....	325

Security Staff	327
One Team, One Fight: Similar Goals	328
Money as Decision-Maker and Goal-Setter	329
De-Ganging as a Goal: If We Don't Say It, Is It?	332
GRAD Defined by Non-GRAD Officers: What They Think GRAD Is.....	335
Administration's View on GRAD: It Just Depends.....	341
Alternate Definitions of Success: Are You Inside the System or Out?	344
Inside the Walls	345
Outside the Walls.....	348
Maximizing Success by Maximizing Safety.....	351
Measuring Success: We Need to Formally Track It Before We Count It.....	354
Target Population: Myth or Reality?	358
Reasons to Renounce	360
I Want a Hug.....	360
I Want Out of Seg	363
I Want to Watch TV.....	364
I Want to Make Parole	365
I Don't Want Today's Gang.....	366
I Don't Want the New Kids on the Block	366
I Don't Want the Lies	368
Decision to Renounce and the Increased Chances of GRAD Success: Race, Age, Length of Time in Ad Seg, and the Likelihood of GRAD Completion	369
Race Differences	370
Age Differences	373
Ad Seg as Deterrent Against Removal and Preparation for Resocialization: How to Get Solitary to Work for You	375
Removal from GRAD	381

Voluntary Removals.....	387
Non-Voluntary Removals.....	391
The Culture of GRAD: Change Happens Over Time	394
Visible Changes in Appearance.....	394
Take Off Your Mask and Let Yourself Breathe: The Shedding Begins in Earnest (Preparation for Personal Transformation)	397
From Ad Seg to GRAD Phase I	397
From Phase I to Phase II and Beyond	402
Rank as Obstacle: Charisma and a Head Nod (Not All GRAD Students Are Created Equal)	404
Group Transformation 101: From Gang to Group, From I to We and Back	407
Group Formation.....	407
Group Formation in Reverse: The Return to I.....	410
How Much Is That Doggy in the Cell Window: From Mad Dog to Friendlier than a Box of Puppies.....	411
Personal Transformation.....	411
Changes in Attitude and Behavior	412
The Accidental Mentors: Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks and Having Them Teach the Box of Puppies.....	415
Internalizing Norms and Finding a New Reference Group in Prison: Practice and Then Practice Some More	420
Humanizing Evil: Relationship Between Correctional Officers and GRAD Offenders	426
Relationship Between GRAD Officers and Educational Staff in Encouraging Resocialization	429
Transformation: It's Not Just for Offenders Anymore.....	435
The End Is the Beginning.....	440
GRAD Version 2.0: Recommendations from the Inside	441
What Next?	442
Renouncing the Gang, But Not the Crime.....	445

Inside Prison	445
Meanwhile, Back on the Street	447
Summary	449
Chapter 6: Discussion	451
Discussion	451
Methodology Review.....	452
Prisonization and Prison Resocialization in Print: “Where’s Waldo’s” Extended Vacation.....	454
Major Findings	455
Definitions of Success.....	456
De-Gangng Not a Focus	457
Modifying Criteria for Success	459
Pre-Resocialization and GRADitude: The Ad Seg Effect in Preparing for Change.....	461
Prisoner of War Effect to Maintain Sanity?	462
From GRAD to Segregation: Lessons Learned and Shared	463
Limitations.....	465
Future Research	468
For Whom the GRAD Calls.....	469
Impact of Incarceration History on STG Membership	469
The Offender’s Perspective	471
Further Qualitative Studies of GRAD Groups	471
Officer Transformation and GRAD’s Potential Lingering Effects.....	472
The Future Is Now: Prison, Cartels and GRAD.....	473
Implications for Social Work.....	475
Conclusion	476
A Final Thought	477

Appendix A: Texas Department of Criminal Justice Security Threat Group-Related Chronology	479
Appendix B: Overview of Major Prisonization and Resocialization Studies Cited	484
Appendix C: Review Board and Data Collection Timeline	490
Appendix D: UT IRB Approval Letter	492
Appendix E: TDCJ Research Project Approval Letter	495
Appendix F: Letter for Informed Consent for TDCJ Staff	497
Appendix G: Letter for Informed Consent for Law Enforcement Officers	500
Appendix H: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for Law Enforcement Officers	503
Appendix I: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Counselors and Teachers	504
Appendix J: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Correctional Staff	506
Appendix K: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO)	509
Appendix L: Matrix with Research Questions and Sources of Evidence	513
Appendix M: Case Study Protocol to Increase Reliability	515
References	516

List of Tables

Table 5.1: Confirmed STG Population and Confirmed STG Ad Seg Population versus Total TDCJ Population by Reporting Period/Date	316
Table 5.2: Growth of Ad Seg and STG Populations in TDCJ, Fiscal Years 2004-2011	317
Table 5.3: STG Ad Seg Population on Hand, 2009-2011	317
Table 5.4: TDCJ Offender Releases from Ad Seg to Community by Fiscal Year	318
Table 5.5: Average Years of Experience Working in TDCJ and GRAD .	319
Table 5.6: Offenders Completing the GRAD Process in January 2012..	324
Table 5.7: Direct Release/Discharge from GRAD Units Mid-Phase, January 2009 to March 2012.....	350

Chapter 1: Introduction

PREFACE

This is a work that has been underway for several years and contains some observations that stem from prior professional experience with the criminal justice systems in Texas and California and countless conversations with colleagues. Through these relationships I began to frame several questions, some of which are addressed in this dissertation. I will allude to conversations that provide specific examples in this effort and will, in some cases, quote specific persons.¹ When that is done, those quotations are with specific permission from those individuals, all of whom are current or former employees of these systems. The names of prison staff and other participants in this study have been changed to protect their identity; only the initials of their pseudonyms remain in the text. Where real names and other identifying information are included, that information has been culled from publicly available sources including, but not limited to, published newspaper and journal articles, documentaries, and unsealed indictments. I observe these cautions to protect those persons who provided the information. When appropriate, I have also requested authorization from agency officials to collect data from these systems. None of this data is collected from individual incarcerated offenders with the exception of quotes from others' research or open source and public media. Specific observations and data drawn for this dissertation study are delineated in

¹ Interviews for this research were conducted in September 2011 and January 2012. All earlier conversations referenced throughout the study are considered archival records, some of which were initiated for and included in written assignments for other doctoral-level classes.

the Methods section in Chapter 4; however, many general conclusions are derived from my professional and educational experiences.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Throughout this dissertation, several terms commonly used in prison life and within the Texas prison system (Texas Department of Criminal Justice or TDCJ) will be introduced. Many will be discussed in greater detail throughout the text, but the following provides the reader with a passing familiarity:

Administrative Segregation (Ad Seg): A “non-punitive, maximum custody status involving separation of an offender from the general population within the prison institution for the purpose of maintaining safety, security, and order among general population offenders, correctional personnel, and the public” (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010,” p. iii). In the Texas prison system, Ad Seg inmates are not afforded contact visits, are prohibited from working and participating in vocational or academic activities, and their movement within the unit is restricted (TDCJ, 2007, “Security threat groups: On the inside,” p. 3). Ad Seg is commonly identified as solitary confinement, whereby an offender is single-celled and restricted to his cell for 23 hours a day, seven days a week, with one hour allowed for recreation (recreation is also a solitary activity).

TDCJ’s Ad Seg has four categories: (1) Security Detention (Levels I-III) is for “an offender who is a current escape risk, threat to the physical safety of other offenders or staff, threat to the order and security of the institution as evidenced by repeated serious disciplinary violations, or a confirmed member of a Security Threat Group” (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth

Quarter FY 2011). Level I offenders, according to Renaud (2002), maintain commissary privileges but cannot attend school, hold a job, or attend drug or alcohol programs. They may have no contact visits or contact with other offenders. Levels II and III have even fewer privileges. Ad Seg, or Security Detention, level is based upon an offender's behavior while in segregation and determines privileges afforded (i.e., commissary spending, ability to participate in educational correspondence courses – if the inmate or family pays – and visitation) (Renaud, 2002, p. 36); (2) Pre-Hearing Detention is for those separated while undergoing investigation for a disciplinary violation when, according to TDCJ, the offender might be an escape risk or a physical threat to the safety of other inmates or staff if he remained in general population during this time, or his removal from general population is “necessary to maintain the integrity of an investigation” (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011); (3) Protective Custody (Levels I-III) is for those inmates who fear for their personal safety “due to threats of harm by others or high likelihood of victimization” (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011). Offenders in Protective Custody Level I are permitted a specified number of contact visits, while other inmates in Protective Custody Levels II and III and Security Detention segregation are only allowed non-contact visits (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011); and (4) Temporary Detention is “used between consecutive terms of solitary confinement for general population offenders when the offender has been sentenced to two or more consecutive terms in solitary confinement” (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011). The

offender may remain in this category if he does not meet the requirements for any of the above categories, has served two or more terms in confinement, and the warden or warden's designee believes he would be a threat to others if he remained in general population (Renaud, 2002; TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011).

Blood In, Blood Out: An oath stating that prospective prison gang members have to kill someone to get into the gang, and death – either kill or be killed – is the only way out.

Confirmed Security Threat Group Member: See “Validated Security Threat Group Member.”

Custody Level: A “designation” that determines the unit on which an offender lives and with whom, the amount of supervision needed, and potential job assignments given. The offender's present and past institutional behavior, along with his current offense and sentence, dictate the custody level (TDCJ, 2004, “Offender orientation handbook”).²

Debriefing: The process by which a prison gang member “gives up” or provides information to correctional staff or the designated prison gang investigator about the gang, its activities, leadership, etc. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), for example, defines the purpose of a debriefing as

learn[ing] enough about the subject and the subject's current gang to:
Allow staff to reasonably conclude the subject has dropped out of that

² See *Offender Orientation Handbook*, pages 5-6, for additional information on Administrative Segregation or Special Management, and General Population Custody Levels. (The term “Special Management” is synonymous with “Administrative Segregation” and is reserved for segregated offenders in State Jail Facilities.)

gang[;] Allow staff to separate the subject from identified gang affiliates, protecting the subject from their retaliation[; and] Allow staff to reclassify the subject regarding possible new custody, housing and assignment needs (CDCR, 2005, "Department operations manual: Article 22, Section 52070.20.2," p. 382).

It also explicitly states that the debriefing "is not for the purpose of acquiring incriminating evidence against the subject" (CDCR, 2005, "Department operations manual: Article 22, Section 52070.20.2," p. 383).

Disciplinary Segregation: Also known as "punitive segregation" (Renaud, 2002, p. 32), disciplinary segregation is a "time-limited punishment" (O'Keefe, Klebe, Stucker, Sturm & Leggett, 2011, pp. 1-2) for offenders "found guilty of a major rule infraction" (Renaud, 2002, p. 33). Because this type of segregation is classified as "punishment," implying that offenders may "lose good time [credit]" (Renaud, 2002, p. 33), the "due process requirements...are much stricter [and] more detailed" (Renaud, 2002, p. 33) than those afforded inmates assigned to Ad Seg.

Disruptive Group: A term previously used to identify Security Threat Groups, or prison gangs, within TDCJ facilities. Other state correctional facilities may also use this term to denote prison gangs, and "Security Threat Group" and "Disruptive Group" may be used synonymously when looking at these groups across state and federal systems.

Free World: A term used to designate the world outside of prison where, as the term clearly denotes, former inmates are "free" and not bound to an institution. Even those offenders released on supervision, or parole, who must abide by certain rules and conditions still consider themselves to be living in the "free world."

Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) Process: TDCJ's nine-month, three-phase voluntary process whereby confirmed Security Threat Group members renounce their gang membership and disassociate from the gang. This process will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

General Population: The prison milieu where the majority of inmates complete their sentences. Those offenders who are able to follow unit rules with minimal misconduct and conform to staff expectations, do not pose an escape risk, are not assaultive toward others, and do not pose a danger to self or others typically serve their sentences in the general prison population.

Known Security Threat Group Member: See "Validated Security Threat Group Member."

Predator Group: A group of offenders within TDCJ facilities whose purpose is to prey on other offenders by using their sheer numbers to intimidate rivals.

Prison Clique: A group of offenders that is monitored for engaging in illegal activity within TDCJ facilities. Many local street gangs that do not meet TDCJ's criteria for being labeled as a Security Threat Group fall under this category.

Prison Gang: See "Security Threat Group." These terms will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

Prisonization: The concept referring to the socialization of inmates in prison. The term's origins are usually attributed to Donald Clemmer, who introduced it in his classic book, *The Prison Community*. The degree of prisonization, or the assimilation into the prison culture and prison community, is

influenced by a variety of factors, including the length of time served in prison and exposure to prison life. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Renunciation: The act of renouncing, or disassociating, oneself from the gang and its activities.³

Resocialization: The concept referring to altering the norms, accepted ways of behavior, and thought patterns from one reference group to another. The internalization of norms is key – if one is presented with an opportunity to break the law, he chooses not to, as that is the right thing to do. Galtung (1958) equates it with doing the right thing even when no one else is watching. In this study, resocialization focuses primarily on shedding the layers of culture that impact and impede changing the norms, values and beliefs of prison gang members who remain incarcerated. These concepts will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Security Threat Group (STG): The term is used interchangeably with “prison gangs.” According to TDCJ, an STG is “any group of offenders TDCJ reasonably believes poses a threat to the physical safety of other offenders and staff due to the very nature of said Security Threat Group” (TDCJ, 2007, “Security threat groups: On the inside,” p. 2). This term will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Twelve STGs currently are recognized within TDCJ:

- 1) Aryan Brotherhood of Texas
- 2) Aryan Circle

³ The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, in its proposed prison gang management strategy released in March 2012, uses the terms “disavow,” “disengage” and “disassociate” to indicate renunciation (CDCR, 2012).

- 3) Barrio Azteca
- 4) Bloods
- 5) Crips
- 6) Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos
- 7) Partido Revolucionario Mexicano
- 8) Mexican Mafia (also known as the Texas Mexican Mafia or Mexikanemi)
- 9) Raza Unida
- 10) Texas Mafia
- 11) Texas Syndicate
- 12) Texas Chicano Brotherhood (TDCJ, 2007, "Security threat groups: On the inside," p. 2)

Suspected Security Threat Group Member: The term used for an offender for whom the prison system has evidence of *possible* STG membership and activities, but lacks the requisite "proof" to elevate him to "validated or confirmed" member status.

Validated, Confirmed or Known Security Threat Group Member: The terms used to identify an offender for whom the prison system has evidence of STG membership. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, self-admission of prison gang membership by an offender; confiscated STG paraphernalia (for example, STG constitutions, knowledge books, or rules and regulations in the offender's possession); tattoo(s) specific to a known STG;⁴ offender

⁴ For example, an STG member will not put on the prison gang-specific tattoo unless he is indeed in the gang. If an individual has a known prison gang tattoo and has not been initiated into that

correspondence (for example, letters that recount STG-related business between known STG members); photographs of known STG members associating with one another; or information received from other law enforcement agencies that have documented an individual as a known STG member (for example, if the offender was convicted of crimes that included conspiracy, gang-related assaults, engaging in organized criminal activity, etc.) (“Gangs: Survey summary,” 2004). For purposes of this research, only male offenders are considered validated, or confirmed, STG members and are eligible to participate in the GRAD process.

INTRODUCTION

To vicariously experience the wrath of gangs, all one has to do today is watch the news or read the papers. Stories chronicling gang-related violence from beyond the prison yard to our own backyards are abundant, providing evidence – via newspaper articles and other popular media – that the proliferation of gangs is impressive and their reach, expansive. In California, for instance, the Aryan Brotherhood was the target of a federal Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization (RICO) case that detailed “hits” ordered from prison (Duersten, 2005). In San Antonio, Texas, leaders of the Texas Mexican Mafia arranged meetings to discuss “hits” on associates and other ranking members (Contreras, 2005). In San Marcos, Texas, an alleged Texas Mexican Mafia member on trial for a home invasion conceived a “jail house plot” to “order a ‘hit’” on the victims who were prepared to testify against him (Miller, 2005). Similarly, Texas Syndicate members allegedly were responsible for orchestrating murders

gang, he will have to answer to members of that particular gang (that is, the members may physically remove it themselves).

and drug trafficking shipments into the United States while secluded in prison (Trahan, 2007). In 2010, 13 members and associates of Raza Unida, a prison gang based in Corpus Christi, Texas, were charged with violent crimes in aid of racketeering (VICAR), including conspiracy to commit murder, robbery, drug trafficking and federal firearms violations (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010; *U.S. v. Mascorro, et al.*, 2011). Two of the defendants conspired to kill another member who allegedly had stolen proceeds from drug sales (Villarreal, 2012), a plan devised with the aid of an illegally-smuggled cellphone while the two were incarcerated in a south Texas prison (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010; Villarreal, 2012).⁵ And Nuestra Familia, a California-based prison gang, continued its reign of criminal activity, including murder, home invasion robberies, and narcotics trafficking, through orders from members locked in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison (Leung, 2009).⁶ Even isolation in one of the most secure and impenetrable prisons within a prison, the SHU, could neither stop nor deter these gangsters from conducting their business both inside and outside the prison walls. Incarceration, despite its best intentions, does not end gang-related activity. Although they are physically isolated from fellow members,

gang leaders still get their orders out onto the streets. “If they know a certain gang member’s paroling they’ll give him all kinds of messages, phone numbers, contacts, hit lists. So the guy leaves with a cache of information [of] people who are supposed to be murdered, people who are supposed to be extorted” (Montgomery, 2005, quoting Lt. Robert Marquez,

⁵ One of the defendants in this plot pleaded guilty in March 2012 and was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison (Villarreal, 2012).

⁶ This *60 Minutes* report, “Gangs Thrive in Maximum Security,” originally aired on May 15, 2005.

chief gang investigator, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Pelican Bay State Prison).

The majority of the public once neither knew nor cared to know exactly what happened behind closed steel doors, often “dismiss[ing]” any violence or poor living conditions in prison “as the price convicts should pay for having committed a crime” (Anti-Defamation League, 2002, p. 8). Gresham Sykes (1958), in his classic penological study, *The Society of Captives*, stated it simply:

The prison wall, then, does more than help prevent escape; *it also hides the prisoners from society* [italics added]. If the inmate population is shut in, the free community is shut out, and the vision of men held in custody is, in part, prevented from arising to prick the conscience of those who abide by the social rules (p. 8).

Today, however, programs such as “Lockup,” “Lockup: Extended Stay San Quentin,” the History Channel’s “Gangland” series, and National Geographic’s documentary on Mara Salvatrucha – with Lisa Ling and company braving a Honduran prison for footage – have introduced this previously-closed world to countless law-abiding citizens whose only former brushes with prison and offenders were caricatured sketches on television dramas where justice was always served in less than an hour. This newfound increased transparency has afforded the public a front row seat to a sanitized and edited version of the correctional system’s reality, sans smells, reverberations of slamming doors, and paranoia about personal safety. Their conscience may be “pricked,” but only until the channel is changed – or until a parolee moves in next door or down the street. Perhaps it is then that the realization hits that 708,677 offenders, assuredly not all gang-affiliated, were released from federal and state prisons and jails in 2010 (Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011). It would be naïve and

unwise to assume that all who are released are no longer committed to a criminal lifestyle. Likewise, it would also be overly optimistic to think that the “containment” of prison gang members is synonymous with the “severance” of gang affiliations and total renunciation of the gang lifestyle upon release, especially when the aforementioned tales prove otherwise.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

2.27 million is a startlingly impressive and sobering figure, especially when it represents the scores of individuals incarcerated in our federal and state prisons and local jails (Glaze, 2011).⁷ The majority of these inmates will eventually be released back into their communities, under community supervision (for those placed on adult probation), parole supervision, or no supervision. As previously mentioned, in 2010, almost 709,000 offenders were released from federal and state prisons and jails (Guerino et al., 2011); in Texas alone, 71,063 offenders were released in Fiscal Year 2010 (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010”).

The release of prisoners, however, does not necessarily indicate preparedness for life back in the community; recidivism rates bear this out.⁸

⁷ This figure represents all offenders incarcerated in federal and state prisons, local jails, and private prisons at yearend 2010. (Actual figure is 2,266,832 individuals.) Inmates held in immigration detention centers, military prisons, Indian country jails, juvenile detention facilities, and in U.S. territories are excluded in the count (Glaze, 2011). At the end of 2010, the U.S. prison population – state and federal custody – boasted 1.6 million offenders (Glaze, 2011; Guerino et al., 2011).

⁸ The U.S. Department of Justice defines recidivism as the “[measure of] criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner’s release” (Hughes & Wilson, 2002). Texas also calculates recidivism in this manner (Texas Legislative Budget Board, 2007, “Statewide criminal justice recidivism and revocation rates”). According to a recent Pew Center report (2011), the recidivism rate is defined as the “rate at which offenders return to prison” (p. 1), for either a conviction for a new crime or a violation of one’s conditions of parole (p. 7). Although national

Statistics show that approximately 95% of all offenders in prison will eventually be released, with almost 80% released on parole (Hughes & Wilson, 2002), implying that the remaining 15% are discharged to fend for themselves without the benefit of state-imposed supervision to temper their newfound freedom. In Texas in Fiscal Year 2010, 32,957 male and female offenders – approximately 21% of the total Texas prison population – were released from prison on parole (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010”).⁹ However, approximately 30% of released offenders “catch the train” back to prison after three years of

recidivism rates “consistently remained around 40 percent” (p. 2) between 1994 and 2007, statewide rates “var[ied] widely” (p. 17). The report addresses these variations, examining the reasons for the differences and why “accepting low or high recidivism numbers as evidence of successful or failing correctional programs” (p. 7) is a fallible proposition. For example, statewide sentencing policies and length of parole supervision influence a state’s recidivism rate: Some states that are more apt to send lower risk offenders to prison will experience lower recidivism rates because those individuals would be less likely to reoffend anyway; the different manner in which states handle technical violations dictates who returns to prison; larger caseloads for parole officers might prevent them from “detect[ing]” violations (p. 18), which would result in detention; and states that place offenders on “shorter periods of post-prison supervision” (p. 18) might experience greater success on parole. (In contrast, California places all released offenders on “mandatory parole, typically for three years” [p. 19] and those who violate these terms are returned to prison for a “short...stay” [p. 18].) Self-report data for Texas from 1999-2002 and 2004-2007, the two three-year periods in which data were collected for the study, revealed recidivism rates of 32.1% and 31.9%, respectively (p. 11).

⁹ This total includes those offenders released on parole, mandatory supervision and discretionary mandatory supervision from prison facilities (and excludes an additional 561 offenders released on parole supervision from a Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facility [p. 34]). According to TDCJ, parole is defined as the “conditional release of an offender from prison, by a Board of Pardons and Paroles decision, to serve the remainder of his/her sentence under supervision in the community” (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010,” p. v). Mandatory supervision is a “type of release from prison provided by law for restricted categories of offenders...[who are eligible]...when their calendar time served added to their good time credit equals the length of their prison sentence. Under the law in effect until August 31, 1996, release to mandatory supervision was automatic for most offenders, with no requirement of release approval from the Board of Pardons and Paroles” (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010,” p. iv). Discretionary mandatory supervision, like mandatory supervision, is “provided by law for restricted categories of offenders...with offenses committed on or after September 1, 1996[,] who are released from prison under Mandatory Supervision contingent upon approval by a Board of Pardons and Paroles panel vote...” (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010,” p. iii).

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 105,000 men and women were on parole in Texas at yearend 2010 (Glaze & Bonczar, 2011).

experiencing life post-release and in the free world (Texas Legislative Budget Board, 2007, "Statewide criminal justice recidivism and revocation rates").¹⁰ If the effectiveness of prison is defined as a reduction in recidivism, then its effectiveness is clearly suspect.

But what about the preparation for offenders, primarily prison gang members who are to be released from the more restrictive prison-within-a-prison, like Administrative Segregation (Ad Seg), into the general population with the majority of inmates? How many gang members are released from solitary confinement and successfully transition to life in general population?¹¹ Furthermore, what about those who do escape the gang with their lives intact? How do they fare as marked men in a "blood in, blood out" game of cat-and-mouse?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Within the last several years, at least within the Texas prison system, gang renunciation has emerged as a possible antidote to the violence and criminal activity that intensify in prison and spill out onto the street. To date,

¹⁰ For Texas releases, the recidivism rate has been consistent over time. For example, in Fiscal Year 2000, 31.3% of offenders were re-incarcerated after three years post-release. Similar, albeit somewhat lower, recidivism rates were reported for Fiscal Years 2001-2003 (FY 2001 reported 28.3%, FY 2002 was 28.2%, and FY 2003 was 27.9%.) (Texas Legislative Budget Board, 2007, "Statewide criminal justice recidivism and revocation rates"). In September 2012, the Council of State Governments' Justice Center issued a brief that addressed recidivism rates for offenders released in 2005 and 2007 for seven states, including Texas. For those released in 2005 and 2007, data revealed an 11% decrease in the number of individuals returning to Texas prisons ("States report reductions in recidivism," p. 5).

¹¹ The focus and contribution of this research are on the reintegration from segregation to the general prison population, primarily because the overwhelming majority of TDCJ inmates who participate in GRAD will remain incarcerated upon successfully completing the process. Implications for reentry to the broader community, or free world, will be addressed later in the dissertation.

however, no studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of gang renunciation programs in the prison setting. Anecdotal evidence is often offered as sole support for the success of renunciation. A reason, perhaps, is due to the lack of consensus on outcome measures. Should evaluation focus on the revalidation or reconfirmation of ex-prison gang members (i.e., those who rejoin the gang), their ability to safely integrate into the general population and assume a sense of normalcy, or, upon release to the community, maintenance of a gang-free lifestyle? Attempts to suppress or completely extract gang identity from members may unwittingly reinforce the behavior prison administrators seek to contain. If they do manage to convert a percentage of gang members, do the agencies have the resources and commitment to maximize offenders' safety while incarcerated?

This dissertation is a descriptive and exploratory case study¹² of the resocialization process of prison gang members through the lens of Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD), a prison gang renunciation process within the Texas prison system. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), which currently operates 111 facilities,¹³ was chosen because it is one of the largest prison systems with arguably one of the largest prison gang populations and has a history of producing, importing and exporting prison gangs. TDCJ implemented its gang renunciation process, as have other state

¹² This study is not a program evaluation nor does it contain an evaluation component. It does not seek to answer if TDCJ's renunciation process *works*, or even if it is effective at preventing former prison gang members from ever engaging or participating in gang life post-GRAD.

¹³ In August 2011, the prison system closed the Central Unit in Sugar Land, Texas, which originally opened in 1909 (Ward, 2011, "Texas first: Prison is closing"), thus bringing the total number of prison facilities to 111.

departments of corrections with similar goals – to decrease gang membership and its stranglehold on the prison, and shake its dependence on segregating prison gang members – but TDCJ has taken a distinct and unique path with GRAD. The GRAD process has been in place since 2000 with more than 2,600 offenders completing the nine-month process,¹⁴ but little information, other than anecdotal evidence, is available to support or disprove its success or effectiveness at de-ganging and resocializing prison gang members for the long haul.

A SPOONFUL OF GANG RENUNCIATION: A TASTE OF TDCJ's GRAD PROCESS

TDCJ's Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) process was “developed [as a response] to the criticism that you can't slam the door on [prison gang members] without any recourse,” according to a prison warden in East Texas (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). It was designed to transform segregated prison gang members into general population offenders in nine months of educational and therapeutic programming. Housed at the Ramsey Unit in Rosharon, Texas, and the Ellis Unit in Huntsville, Texas,¹⁵ the GRAD process serves as a cocoon and safety net for prison gang members whose institutional reality has been solitary confinement and whose social interactions have been limited to vicarious conversations between prison staff overheard through a steel door, passing “kites,” or notes, to other offenders, or flashing hand signs to an inmate across the cellblock. The three-phase, nine-month process imbues participants with cognitive intervention and substance

¹⁴ As of February 29, 2012, a total of 2,668 offenders had completed the GRAD process.

¹⁵ The GRAD process was expanded to the Ellis Unit in Huntsville, Texas, in October 2008.

abuse/anger management skills as they transition from living in segregation and isolation to having a cellmate from an historically rival gang to, finally, being re-integrated into the general population for the duration of their sentence, or being paroled to the free world. The GRAD process, along with the risks to renunciation and potential administrative obstacles, will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper will address the process and barriers to resocializing prison gang members within prison and will look at how, if possible, culture is created, dismantled and rebuilt when the closed system remains the same. The rub lies in stripping away the layers of street and gang culture, prison gang culture, and prison culture to resocialize prison gang members into a new reference group upon release from years of segregation into the general prison population, the milieu where most offenders serve their sentences and are able to earn the few privileges prison offers. For example, how does the prison system deprogram gangsters and teach them to “unlearn” the values and norms of not only prison but also their gang culture? How does one tell another that his internal code, his moral compass, points in the opposite direction of the rest of the world when it was *right* for his world? How does one make an offender believe he can choose a different path when, for him, “joining a gang wasn’t a choice,” as Luis J. Rodriguez (2005) proclaims about a former gang member who was reformed through Homeboy Industries’ bakery in Los Angeles, California? How does one unlearn hyper-vigilance when it has been a survival mechanism in prison? How can a prison program change an individual and expect that change to “stick” if

the prison culture and environment have not changed, and then expect a successful reintegration into the general population? And, perhaps more importantly, how can a system ensure the safety of those braving renunciation?

Although many of these questions are intertwined, this research will address the following:

- (1) What are TDCJ's measures for "effectiveness" and how does it define "success" for GRAD? What are its goals for offenders who complete the GRAD process (i.e., No recidivism? No major disciplinary infractions once returned to the general population? A commitment to remaining gang-free in prison and the free world?)? Based on what is known about prison resocialization, prison culture, gang culture and prison gangs, as well as general theory and findings with regard to socialization, would a process like GRAD even be expected to be effective?
- (2) Are there differences between the types of prison gang members who choose to renounce and those who opt to continue a life in administrative segregation as prison gang members?
- (3) How do the views and perceptions of correctional staff regarding a prison gang member's ability or inability to "repair" himself mitigate the potential success of the GRAD process in the immediate and long-term? How does prison administration view the process of change and resocialization based on their perceptions of prison gangs, and how does this impact the process and its potential for expansion, support and longevity?

Ultimately, this study will use the GRAD process to see if gang culture can be extracted from a prison gang member, and, if that is successful, whether the prison culture can then be extracted from the prisoner. The process strives for internal change, change at the very core of an individual, when in prison and through GRAD, but when the offenders return to the larger prison community in general population and are subjected to the mainstream prison culture and same social factors, if they have yet to fully internalize the new norms and values to which they were exposed, will they return to their old thoughts and beliefs in order to survive the remainder of their sentences? It might be possible to take the gang out of the gangster, but can one then take the prison out of the prisoner?

RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL WORK

Social work was borne out of sociology, psychiatry and economics, with its origins in child abuse, juvenile justice and law enforcement, and a dual mission of individual and social change. The marriage of social work and corrections was inevitable, as the following abridged history illustrates.

In the early 1800s, communities were responsible for carrying out criminal justice, as “American governments of that day were underdeveloped, shoestring operations” (Ruth & Reitz, 2003, p. 10). Private citizens handled the criminal proceedings. In 1879 the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (previously known as the Conference of Boards of Public Charities) was formed, with Jane Addams as its first female president. Several years later, in 1885, the Chicago Protective Agency was established as the first organization to provide assistance and support to women who had been abused. With the first social

work summer training program offered in 1898 (Austin, 1986; Roberts & Brownell, 1999), social workers focused on “serving the poor and disadvantaged and social outcasts” (Roberts & Brownell, 1999, p. 363).

The following year, in 1899, the Illinois Juvenile Court Act was passed as a response to child abuse, neglect and delinquency, thus establishing the nation’s first juvenile court in Cook County, Illinois. Originally “entrusted with determining treatment to rehabilitate and set juveniles on the path to becoming good members of society” (Slott, 1993, p. 10), juvenile court entrusted the role of parent to the state. The underlying concept of *parens patriae* labeled parental irresponsibility as the root of crime, and those engaging in criminal activity, victims of improper care at home. Hence, juveniles were not held responsible for their criminal actions. The Act contended that juveniles were incomplete persons who, with nurturing and guidance, could fulfill their potential. Therefore, they should not be judged according to the adult standards of criminal law (Stevenson, Carter, Terman, Larson, Gomby & Behrman, 1996). During juvenile court’s early childhood, judges relied on voluntary juvenile probation officers and their preliminary social investigations to guide their decisions; however, as caseloads grew and the severity of offenses increased, it was apparent “trained” professionals were needed (Fox, 1996). Jane Addams foreshadowed this next stage in juvenile court’s evolution and the “professionalization” of untrained probation officers who had to handle the worst cases (Fox, 1996). With this realization, in 1908 the women’s volunteer organization in Chicago raised money to hire Dr. William Healy, M.D., to conduct a scientific inquiry into delinquent behavior, and to lend some legitimacy to their mission. Dr. Healy believed in

individual psychological evaluations and diagnosis as keys to understanding child development and its success (or lack of) in rehabilitation (Fox, 1996; Roberts & Brownell, 1999). His work laid the groundwork for the emergence of child guidance clinics (Fox, 1996). University-trained professionals and social workers gradually assumed the roles of probation officers, with consultants from the fields of psychiatry and psychology eventually joining the court (Fox, 1996).

The late nineteenth century saw the “professionalization of the criminal justice system” (Ruth & Reitz, 2003, p. 10); thus, the private sector’s involvement diminished as individuals with expertise filled the ranks (Riveland, 1999; Ruth & Reitz, 2003). By the early 1900s, probation and parole were introduced into the criminal justice lexicon (Ruth & Reitz, 2003).

During the 1910s-1920s, police departments created interagency bureaus to handle social issues, with policewomen acting as social workers. However, the arrival of the Great Depression hastened the demise of these positions (Roberts & Brownell, 1999).

In the 1960s, deinstitutionalization resulted in an increased number of mentally ill offenders being handled through the criminal justice system (Whitmer, 1983). It paved the way for the premature release of offenders to the streets, free from sometimes-coerced psychiatric treatment, but not free from illness. Subsequent arrests for public nuisance and other crimes – often due to homelessness or substance abuse – reacquainted many with jail, prosecution and lengthier periods of incarceration. Jails had become the psychiatric hospitals for those not blessed with steady employment, social support systems, or insurance. The ensuing demand for community-based care for those patients

who had been prematurely released from psychiatric institutions overburdened the community health clinics (Whitmer, 1983). Social workers soon added legal-scholar-in-training to their litany of professional roles, as they became versed in the legal rights of the mentally ill and their right to refuse treatment.

During the past 30-plus years, legislative policies directly impacting social workers in the criminal justice milieu have been enacted. The following is a compilation of notable legislation:

- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, which created the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention;
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, which led to the creation of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect;
- Law Enforcement Assistance Act in 1974, which provided block grants for police social work and victim assistance programs; and
- Victims of Crime Act of 1984, which provided greater funding for victims and decreased rehabilitation programs for offenders (Brownell & Roberts, 2002).

Social workers have had a long history of being advocates and agents of change for those deemed beyond hope and repair. Working with mandated clients has been the domain of social work; the centerpiece of this study, the GRAD process, epitomizes the best of both worlds: mandated clients who voluntarily renounce and volunteer for participation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

Through this study, my contribution to social work is an examination of correctional policy as it affects a relatively small but disruptive and problematic prison population whose connections to the outside world render its potential for violence exponentially worse. This is an important topic for not only the corrections field, but also the families and communities from where gang members originate and to where they return. It is also a critical topic for social policy due to the ever-increasing prison population, the skyrocketing costs of maintaining the enterprise, and the potential for therapeutic programming and prison resocialization.

Additionally, this research hopes to expand prison officials' views of group formation and processes within a closed system so their view is not limited to individuals acting alone at the expense of ignoring prison culture and the institutional context shaping that behavior. It is highly improbable that prisons will abandon the physical blueprint of the modern day prison and opt for therapeutic communities with 16 or 20 offenders living in a dorm with a counselor and correctional officers. As a TDCJ prison gang official rhetorically asked, "If the [Security Threat Group Management Office] was really doing its job, then why would we have a gang problem? If it was meant to stop the gangs, then why hasn't it stopped them" (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007)?¹⁶ The simple answer: Because a naturally occurring process – group formation –

¹⁶ The mission statement of TDCJ's Security Threat Group Management Office, as posted on the agency's public Web site, reads: "To ensure that the safety of staff and offenders is met by the monitoring, identifying and housing of STG Members in a safe and secure fashion[; and] To ensure that information obtained regarding any group deemed a threat to the safety of Texas Department of Criminal Justice staff, offenders, or the public is evaluated and disseminated in a timely and effective manner" (TDCJ, "Security threat group management office").

cannot be stopped, only interrupted and redirected. One goal is to educate correctional staff on this type of framework so the fixation is not on the individual offender and his personal idiosyncrasies that create and exacerbate the problem. It is not a simple case of prison gang members as a “few bad apples” (the individual level), but rather the organization and culture that create the conditions that can not only hide the few bad apples, but also multiply them into an entire orchard.

Finally, the implications of this study extend to the field's renewed interest in prisoner reentry.¹⁷ With the realization that “they all come home,” states are focusing on an offender's release back into the community. But what happens to those offenders simply trying to reenter from the most restrictive to the less restrictive prison environment? The concept of reentry should be broadened to include not only release into the community, but also transfers from the most restrictive prison setting (long-term placement in Ad Seg or solitary confinement) to the less restrictive (general prison population). This will be discussed further in Chapter 3, specifically as it relates to those offenders completing the GRAD process and returning to general population.

DISSERTATION ROADMAP

The remainder of this chapter will briefly examine the history of prisons and the goals and purpose of incarceration and the criminal justice system, as they establish the backdrop for the need for prison resocialization. The history of the Texas prison system will also be discussed, with an emphasis on its use of

¹⁷ Prisoner reentry is often defined as “the process of leaving prison and returning to society” (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001, p. 1).

building tenders as substitute guards, a nod to the landmark *Ruiz v. Estelle* federal case that prompted the dissolution of the building tender system, and the perfect storm of conditions for prison gang evolution. A review of the literature will be presented in Chapter 2, focusing on the differences between street and prison gangs and offering a snapshot of the current gang landscape. Chapter 2 will also address prison gang management policies and general responses to prison gang activity, along with the effects of the increased use of administrative segregation to contain prison gang members and increase safety for staff and other inmates. It will conclude with a review of the literature on resocialization in prison, examining the conflicts among the street, inmate, prison and prison administration cultures that affect prison resocialization. Chapter 3 will provide a more detailed account of the GRAD process through which TDCJ prison gang members are able to formally renounce their membership and affiliation, return to general population, and partake in the prison programming afforded all inmates not subject to such disciplinary scrutiny based on gang affiliation. The “before, during and after” of GRAD participation will be addressed, including the risks to renunciation and potential administrative obstacles. Chapter 4 will then lay out the methods and design of the case study, including the challenges inherent in conducting research in the prison setting, review board processes, selection of interview subjects, and limitations and potential biases. Results will be presented in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 will conclude with a discussion and interpretation of the findings, along with the study’s limitations, and will forecast the direction of prison gang research and additional topics that are beyond the scope of this dissertation. The multi-layered nature of prison gangs, their connections to a

multitude of criminal organizations and street-level criminals, and the ever-changing nature of those relationships to further their gangs' activities necessitate a flexible and fluid approach.

A VERY ABRIDGED HISTORY OF THE U.S. PRISON SYSTEM

The evolution of prisons in the United States has been a moral and religious one, as prisons were deemed a “more humane alternative” (Craig, 2004, p. 93S) to the earlier torturous and barbaric forms of punishments meted out in British North America (Woodham, 2008).¹⁸ The roots of American penology and the penitentiary lie in religious philosophy (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; O'Connor, 2002; Sheldon, 2004) and were derived from Quaker principles and values. Central to Quaker teachings was the idea that reform was possible through “silent contemplation” (Gould, 2003, p. 1-21). Pennsylvania Quakers pressed for deep thought – penance – and a spiritual rebirth to lead prisoners to a righteous and law-abiding path, believing that solitary confinement was the way to achieve this (Craig, 2004). It was “initially begun...as an element of great social progress and reform, a repudiation of punishment, an optimistic belief in the ability for people to change” (Grassian, 2005, p. 14). Quiet the speech and quiet the mind; isolate the offender and isolate the behavior. A quiet life, it was anticipated, would translate to a quiet and settled mind primed for penitence, contemplation and redemption. Eastern State Penitentiary, which opened in 1829 on the outskirts of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, epitomized these aspirations, and the “Pennsylvania System,” as the prison model was called,

¹⁸ For an historical account of the types of punishments administered, such as the ducking stool, the stocks, and whipping, see William Andrews' *Old Time Punishments*, originally published in 1891.

operated with repentance, solitude and meditation at its core (Woodham, 2008).¹⁹ The Pennsylvania model longed to facilitate an “internal spiritual conversion that would restore criminals to virtue and honesty” (O’Connor, 2002). An aerial view of the prison resembled a concrete spider, with “seven wings of individual cellblocks radiating from a central hub” (Woodham, 2008).

The increase in the prison population, however, “made solitary confinement impossible to preserve” (Craig, 2004, p. 94S). Eastern State Penitentiary eventually relinquished its hold on solitude and penance in 1913 (Woodham, 2008) and adopted the “New York” or “Auburn Model” espoused by Beaumont and de Tocqueville, which combined solitude and work. The Auburn State Prison welcomed its first prisoners in 1819 and was the epitome of the New York Model’s “silent system” (Craig, 2004, p. 94S). It mandated that prisoners engage in labor during the day and spend the evenings in silence and solitude (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Handbook of Texas Online, 2001; Riveland, 1999). New York’s correctional contributions were “regarded as equally reformatory but more pragmatic. Whereas Pennsylvania focused on reclaiming the soul, New York emphasized disciplining the body” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 68).

The late 1800s welcomed a shift to the “indeterminate sentence” to provide incentive and hope for offenders to reform if the possibility of an early release was feasible (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Riveland, 1999), and

¹⁹ The Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was originally fashioned as “the world’s first ‘penitentiary’” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 67); however, it soon became overcrowded and was rife with criminal activity and a host of “[similar] ills it was supposed to extinguish” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 67). The proposed solution was to build the “most philosophically ambitious prison ever conceived” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 67). In 1823, construction began on Eastern State Penitentiary, and by its grand opening six years later, it was the “most expensive building in America” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 67).

penitentiaries underwent a name change to “reformatories” to reflect their new mission. By the mid-1900s, many prisons once again experienced a semantic overhaul and were renamed “correctional institutions” (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000). In the 1980s, the rise of “Supermax” prisons, the distant cousin of the Pennsylvania model, incorporated cell restriction at its core (Shelden, 2004), leaving inmates to navigate a prison-within-a-prison with sensory deprivation and devoid of human interaction.

The social function of prison, whether it be the Pennsylvania or New York models, or even a Supermax, is to create constraints to prevent crime – specifically physical (i.e., those “external to the individual” [Galtung, 1958, p. 127], such as the prison structure itself; the drape of the concertina wire; and the guards in watchtowers prepared to shoot upon escape) and “biological” (Galtung, 1958, p. 127) (i.e., long sentences so offenders may enter with relative youth on their side but age exponentially, physically and mentally, with each passing, structured year; poor nutrition, whether living on the starches of the chow hall or mastering their culinary skills with commissary items, a packet of chili powder and a hot pot; and substandard health care) (Galtung, 1958). According to Galtung (1958), prisons also contribute to society by creating a “cheap labor force” (p. 129); fulfilling the public’s need for retribution; emphasizing the differences in power (i.e., the *haves*, such as administration and the law-abiding public, against the *have-nots*, represented by the offenders); and resocializing offenders through the internalization of new norms and values.

PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND INCARCERATION

“As a prisoner expressed it: ‘This prison is neither harsh enough to make me repent or to fear it, nor is it good enough to make me accept society.’”

—Johan Galtung, 1958, p. 139

The goals of the criminal justice system and incarceration are varied yet few, with each assuming greater importance with each change in political climate. For example, federal sentencing reform, which culminated in the Sentencing Reform Act in 1984 (Nagel, 1990; Tonry, 1996; von Hirsch, 1989; Wilkins, 1992) and was borne out of escalating crime rates between 1960 and 1980, and the civil unrest and race riots during the mid- to late-1960s led the public to believe that disorder and crime were rampant and unstoppable. These factors, coupled with former President Richard Nixon’s 1968 “crime control” platform that abetted these fears, shifted the perceived solution to crime to be through punishment. Robert Martinson’s 1974 meta-analysis on correctional rehabilitation programs implemented in the 1940s-1960s that concluded “nothing works” further fueled the untested belief that crime control and law and order would more effectively punish criminals. The War on Drugs during the Reagan administration in a “tough on crime” era witnessed the “‘politicization’ of crime” (Shelden, 2004, p. 8); conservatives wanted the “toughness” of sentencing reform, while the more liberal constituents agreed that disparity and discrimination of the sentencing practices of the day could be lessened with reform. The War on Drugs certainly impacted and fueled the prison boom (Mauer, 1999; Shelden, 2004), as arrests for drug-related offenses increased.²⁰

²⁰ The War on Drugs introduced an era of increased drug-related arrests for minorities – from “under 600 per 100,000 in 1980 to over 1500 in 1990” (Shelden, 2004, p. 5) – and a subsequent increase in the percentage of African-Americans being incarcerated (Spohn, 2000).

Truth-in-sentencing, which aimed to narrow the gap between the sentence given and the sentence served, became the rallying cry that hinged on two of the goals of prison and the criminal justice system, deterrence and punishment, both of which are inextricably linked with the additional goal of incapacitation. These goals, along with rehabilitation, often portrayed as the seen-but-not-as-loudly-heard goal, are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Incapacitation, deterrence, punishment (also referred to as “just deserts” or “retribution”) and rehabilitation are most often cited as the core goals of incarceration (Cayley, 1998; Nagel, 1990) and may easily be separated into “utilitarian” and “retributive” perspectives (Spohn, 2000). That is, deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation fall under the utilitarian umbrella, and punishment illustrates the retributive. The utilitarian model aims “to prevent future crime...[with] the severity of the sanction imposed on an offender [serving] this purpose” (Spohn, 2000, p. 437). Punishment, therefore, should not be “more harsh or intrusive than is necessary” (Tonry, 1996, p. 18). The punishment doled out should also be commensurate with what is needed to rehabilitate the individual offender and deter him from committing future crimes.

(1) Incapacitation.

Incapacitation involves the physical removal of offenders from the community and, theoretically, from the crime equation. According to Wilson (1992), for incapacitation to truly be effective, (1) prison must prevent offenders, had they remained on the street, from committing new crimes; (2) other criminals are not waiting in line to take over from the offender who has been removed and is now incarcerated; and (3) prisons “must not be such successful ‘schools for

crime” (p. 149) that offenders, upon release, use what they have learned in prison to become even more capable criminals. In one study, DeLisi (2003) examined official data of 1,005 inmates and found that 40% were “chronic” or “extreme career offenders,” even during incarceration (p. 662). Crime clearly does not stop at the prison gate, and for criminals committed to a lifetime and lifestyle oriented toward crime, incapacitation may be more a crime control strategy in wishful thinking than in reality.

(2) Deterrence.

Two types of a perceived deterrent effect exist: specific and general. Specific deterrence is aimed at a particular individual, hoping that his punishment will deter him from committing future crimes due to the “lesson learned” (Shelden, 2004, p. 8). General deterrence, on the other hand, prevents other individuals from engaging in criminal activity because they have observed the punishment associated with the crime; they have learned by watching others. Deterrence, according to Shelden (2004), embodies the pleasure-pain principle, whereby “humans are rational with free will and seek to minimize pain and maximize pleasure” (p. 8). The subsequent arrest and incarceration, with its immediate (i.e., cannot sleep in one’s own bed, control the television remote, or hug a family member) and collateral, future consequences (i.e., conviction may preclude one from returning to or finding gainful employment, voting, living in certain communities, or retaining social support systems), theoretically should produce an overwhelming amount of physical and psychological pain that will dissuade an individual from choosing or continuing a life of crime.

However, the extent to which both specific and general deterrence succeed is based upon the offender's ability not to recidivate. If the criminal behavior on the street sends one to prison, and that behavior and attitude continue within the prison setting, then both specific and general deterrence have failed.²¹ But with the normalization of prison – and with so many individuals incarcerated and eventually released back into the communities from which they were convicted – the probability that a person does not know someone who has been in prison, or at least arrested, is arguably low. And for those who see no choice but to join a prison gang or other clique for carceral protection, for those who perceive their only two options as either being victimized or victimizer while incarcerated, the deterrence factor may make little, if any, sustained impression.

As the next chapter reveals, gang activity does not cease once the prison doors close. Often the behavior and offenses escalate and peak into organized crime, as gang activity on the streets is controlled by leaders in steel cages and concrete boxes.

(3) Punishment (also referred to as Justice, “Just Deserts” or Retribution).

Ultimately the punishment should fit the crime and should be “deserved” (Tonry, 1996, referring to von Hirsch, 1976). The severity of the sentence should be

²¹ However, prison administrative policies may deter offenders from engaging in certain behaviors. For example, TDCJ policy dictates that confirmed prison gang members be placed in administrative segregation. Offenders who are keenly aware of this policy may decide against joining a prison gang, or Security Threat Group, because the thought of serving a sentence in isolation with no privileges is not palatable. They may still engage in criminal activity, or be involved in the gang lifestyle, while in prison, but they will not cross the line and join an identified Security Threat Group only to be classified as a prison gang member and placed in segregation.

closely linked to the seriousness of the crime and the culpability of the offender; thus, those who commit comparable offenses should receive similar punishments, and those who commit more serious crimes should be punished more harshly than those who commit less serious crimes. Like cases...should be treated alike (Spohn, 2000, pp. 436-437).

Tonry (1996), however, points out a key flaw with “just deserts.” If the goal is to “treat like cases alike” (p. 14), and base the severity of the punishment on the seriousness of the crime, then its corollary should also be applicable: “Treat different cases differently” (p. 14). If sentences under the punishment philosophy were doled out based on offense and an offender’s criminal record, then individual aggravating and mitigating factors would not be considered. “Just deserts” also governs prison policies that parallel this premise when classifying prison gang members. Within TDCJ, if the “offense” is being a confirmed member of an identified prison gang, then the punishment, per administrative policy, is placement in administrative segregation, regardless of whether or not the inmate’s overt behavior in prison warrants segregation.²²

(4) Rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation was embraced in the early 1900s and continued throughout the century as a goal of the criminal justice system; however, it suffered a backlash in the 1970s (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000) when Martinson (1974) published his meta-analysis of studies from the 1940s-1960s measuring the average effects of treatment programs on recidivism. Although studies conducted since have shown some effectiveness in reducing the recidivism rate, scholars remained reluctant to accept that “something indeed works” (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000) for specific offenders under specific conditions. Cullen and

²² The Texas prison system’s administrative response to Security Threat Group management will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Gendreau (2000) point out that cognitive behavioral programs, which are known today to be effective at reducing recidivism, were not included in Martinson's original analysis. Although Martinson "withdr[e]w this conclusion" (Martinson, 1979, p. 254, cited in Cullen & Gendreau, 2000, p. 131) in 1979, the field has not been able to fully distance itself from the sound bite, and Cullen and Gendreau (2000) admit that criminologists "embraced an antirehabilitation position almost as a matter of professional ideology" (p. 124), despite subsequent evidence supporting treatment's effectiveness.

The Sentencing Reform Act passed in 1984 made "patently clear the rejection of the rehabilitative model and goals upon which past sentencing decisions had been made, in favor of the new bases for sentencing – to punish, to promote respect for law, to deter and to incapacitate" (Nagel, 1990, p. 928). Out of all of these, rehabilitation appears to be the one goal least consistent with the others. Even Johan Galtung, back in 1958 when he recounted his experience in a Norwegian prison, acknowledged the "discussion centered around the compatibility or incompatibility of the function of resocializing the inmates on one hand, and all the other functions...on the other" (p. 127).

In Texas, TDCJ's statutorily-mandated mission explicitly states "reintegration" as one of its goals²³ (and noticeably absent is the word "rehabilitation"), which seems a less ambitious version of "rehabilitation" or "resocialization." Repairing and rebuilding broken offenders to a state in which

²³ See Sec. 493.001, Texas Government Code. "The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime." (In response to the Texas state budget crisis, in March 2011 Texas legislators proposed – unsuccessfully – to abolish TDCJ's Victim Services Division to conserve agency funds.)

they may never have been before is daunting. Resocializing and, in essence, erasing the norms, values and cultural trappings of their neighborhood, gang, clique or even prison are equally formidable tasks. Creating someone completely new with a different belief system? Too hard. But reintegrating? Perhaps that can be accomplished more easily. Prison just has to make them “fit” into the broader community. If administration pushes hard enough, it might have a better chance at fitting the square peg into the round hole (i.e., reintegrate) than making the square peg see itself as and believing it is round (i.e., resocialize), or chipping away at the edges to reveal curves (i.e., rehabilitate). Renaud (2002) offers his perspective on the purpose of prison and TDCJ’s mission statement, as interpreted by offenders:

[The] system is not there to rehabilitate, to perform surgery, or to provide education or substance abuse counseling. Those may be a by-product of prison, but they take a back seat to security. The mission of TDCJ is to incarcerate convicted criminals and to ensure they don’t escape (p. 3).

Incapacitation and public safety/crime control will always supersede the other goals.

Gould (2003) further explains that prisons use rehabilitative programming as a management strategy to control inmate behavior. If inmates are able to participate in educational and vocational opportunities, thereby decreasing the amount of idle time on their hands, they will have less time to spend thinking about ways to escape, incite riots, assault their peers, or attack correctional staff – and if their behavior comports with the rules and expectations of the prison, they may be eligible for good-time credit or the possibility of an earlier parole. Such programming may also contribute to the safety and security of the facility by

“addressing substance abuse issues, and treating the mental health needs of the residents” (Gould, 2003, p. 1-5). Gould does concede that this is a chicken-or-egg scenario – facilities must be safe and secure if therapeutic programs are to be given a chance to succeed, and if they can succeed, they can foster a safe and secure facility. Rehabilitation is viewed as a privilege only to be offered once safety is ensured, but even then, it is not accepted by all.

Some mental health staff members may also be seen by other correctional staff as taking the inmates’ side and being advocates for them. Even if mental health staff do not see themselves as advocating for the inmates, the correctional and administrative staffs may label them “bleeding hearts” as a result of their interest in humane treatment of inmates (Gould, 2003, p. 1-22).

These contrasting perspectives will be presented in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

Further complicating any potential positive effects of rehabilitation is the underlying consequence of prison and offender management: to “depersonalize” the offender, which the system accomplishes through the enactment of policies that advance this goal “in the name of security” (Renaud, 2002, p. 19). Backing up Nils Christie’s concept of “the social production of moral indifference” (Cayley, 1998) and social distance,²⁴ Renaud (2002), himself a former Texas inmate, asserts this need is also “for the guards’ benefit. If they do not see us as people, but as a mass of interchangeable inmates, they will not readily form associations with us” (p. 19). Not all see that “there is a man in that cell,” as one TDCJ prison

²⁴ In order to understand how some Norwegian guards were able to mistreat and even kill Yugoslavian prisoners in a prison camp during World War II, criminologist Nils Christie interviewed the guards and found that those who decreased the social distance between guard and prisoner – by interacting at the individual level and viewing the prisoner as a “person” – treated the prisoners more humanely (Cayley, 1998).

gang official often says (P.F., personal communication, January 31, 2007), perhaps hoping that his mere repetition of humanizing the offender will become a part of the system's core values.

Although politicians may seek to appease their constituents with tough-on-crime comments, research indicates that the public, according to Warr (1994), “want[s] the system to accomplish multiple goals” (cited in Cullen, Fisher & Applegate, 2000, p. 51). Cullen, Fisher and Applegate (2000) contend that the system does not have to operate under one strict philosophy, rehabilitation or incapacitation. The public, it appears, is willing to embrace the Reese's peanut butter cup approach, at least in polls. This theoretical blend of punishment and rehabilitation can coexist *and* taste great. How the Texas prison system attempts to accomplish this and the path it has taken to balance punishment and rehabilitation will be examined in the next section.

THE PRESENT FROM THE PAST: EVOLUTION FROM TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (TDC) TO TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (TDCJ)

This section will briefly examine the history of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and its transformation from a self-supporting system to one molded by judicial reform. The historical focus will be on the building tender system and its aftermath, the rise of prison gangs and system-wide violence in the mid-1980s, and the administrative policies implemented to deal with the bloodbath. This study is rooted within this context. The natural evolution of prison gangs, along with the introduction of gang renunciation and how it is aligned with the goals of prison, will also be discussed. Appendix A presents an

historical timeline related to the growth of Security Threat Groups in Texas prisons and the system's management strategies.

Contemporary TDCJ Demographics

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)²⁵ currently operates 111 facilities,²⁶ with the majority of institutions huddled in the piney woods of Huntsville, Texas. According to TDCJ's *Statistical Report Fiscal Year 2010*, on August 31, 2010, 154,795 inmates were incarcerated throughout the state. In Fiscal Year 2010, approximately 71,000 men and women were released from TDCJ facilities,²⁷ yet another 72,315 individuals were admitted. Similar to other state and federal prison populations, more than 90% of Texas inmates are male, and approximately 82% of the total prison population (male and female) is between the ages of 20 and 49, with an average age of 37.4 years old.²⁸ Approximately 36% of total offenders are African-American, 32% classified as Hispanic, and 31% White. Operating with a deficit of approximately 1,000 correctional officers as of August 2010 (TDCJ, 2011, "Annual review 2010"),

²⁵ The Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) was statutorily changed to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) during the 71st Legislative Session, and the name change became effective on September 1, 1989.

²⁶ The number of facilities includes state- (51) and privately-operated (7) prisons, pre-release facilities (5, including one work release facility), psychiatric/Mentally Retarded Offender Program (MROP) units (4), medical facilities (2), transfer facilities (14), private pre-parole transfer facilities (2), State Jails (15), privately-operated State Jails (5), substance abuse units (5), and one unit classified as "Multi-Use" (TDCJ, "Unit directory"). In August 2011, the prison system closed the Central Unit in Sugar Land, Texas, which originally opened in 1909 (Ward, 2011, "Texas first: Prison is closing").

²⁷ This figure excludes inmates who were transferred from the agency and did not return, held on bench warrants, died while in custody, or executed by lethal injection (TDCJ, 2011, "Statistical report fiscal year 2010").

²⁸ The average age in prison units for males is 37.8 years old (33.8 years old in State Jail Facilities and 33.7 years old in Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facilities) and 37.2 for females (35.4 years old in State Jail Facilities and 34.4 years old in Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facilities) (TDCJ, 2011, "Statistical report fiscal year 2010," p. 8).

TDCJ employs approximately 41,000 employees (excluding contract medical professional, Windham School District employees, and those working in non-TDCJ-operated facilities, such as private prisons), with approximately 29,000 designated as correctional staff (TDCJ, 2011, "Annual review 2010").²⁹ The projected prison population for Texas, both male and female, was expected to top 168,000 by 2012, according to a 2008 nationwide prison population survey ("Prison populations: Survey summary," 2008, p. 15).³⁰ But 163 years ago, it all began with one.

One has been called the loneliest number, but in Texas, it was not lonely for long. In 1849, the Texas prison system first opened its doors of the Huntsville Unit (soon nicknamed the "Walls" unit for its bricked fortress exterior) and welcomed its first inmate, a horse thief from Fayette County (Handbook of Texas Online, 2001).³¹ "One" expanded exponentially throughout the years, as the number of beds increased. By 1865, the prison system had expanded to accommodate 165 prisoners, and, six years later, it housed more than 500 offenders (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987). The prison system adopted the New York model of prison management (Handbook of Texas Online, 2001), as the original prison plans in Huntsville "proposed solitary nighttime cells and

²⁹ In its "proposed two-year budget" to be submitted to the Texas Legislature in August 2012, TDCJ reported that "2,700 out of 25,000 correctional-security jobs statewide are now vacant" (Ward, 2012, "Texas prison officials make pitch for guards' raises, despite budget crunch").

³⁰ Based on data provided by TDCJ, approximately 155,000 men and women were incarcerated in Texas prisons in February 2012.

³¹ According to Perkinson (2010), the first inmate was a "farmer sentenced to three years for cattle theft" (p. 76).

communal workshops” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 75). Work, it was believed, paved the road to enlightenment and reformation. Prisoners were a source of cheap labor³² and were soon co-opted by private interests “to help fill the labor void left by the abolition of slavery” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 5) in 1865.³³ In April 1875, the “Texas Penitentiary Report of the Commission Appointed by The Governor of Texas” noted that short offender sentences precluded them from learning a trade; thus, they were steered toward plantation work (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987). By the mid-1860s, the “convict lease system” was legislated that private individuals known as “lessees,” which included plantation owners and railroad companies, could hire inmates and not only pay the state for their labor, but also be responsible for “managing the system” (Texas Archival Resources Online). According to this “convict labor” law,

“first-class” felons convicted of serious crimes, the greater portion of them whites, would stay on at the Walls. A larger number of “second-class” convicts, most of them African Americans convicted of low-level offenses, were to be treated like impressed slaves during the war. They were to be deployed around the state on “works of public utility.” Significantly, “public utility” was defined broadly, opening the door for any “company or individual” to hire convicts for railroad construction, mining, iron smelting, or irrigation (Perkinson, 2010, p. 89).

³² As the inmate population decreased during the Civil War, the prison needed all available laborers to maintain its status as a healthy revenue source: “So lucrative was the convict textile business that the penitentiary covered all of its costs and deposited net profits into the state treasury. By 1864, the Walls became Texas’s leading source of revenue” (Perkinson, 2010, pp. 79-80).

³³ Despite the abolition of slavery, inmates throughout the country were still considered “slaves of the state” (as defined in *Ruffin v. Commonwealth*, 1871).

Texas inmates were subsequently “hired out to the highest bidder” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 84),³⁴ thus maintaining the self-sufficient and self-sustaining nature of the prison system. Lessors “paid Texas officials for the right to have their hired prisoners pile up the profits” (Renaud, 2002, p. xv), and because prisoners were considered “slaves of the state,” those slaves kept prison costs down and prison pockets full. However, in September 1910, Texas Governor Thomas Campbell signed the “Act Establishing a Prison System,” thus declaring the convict lease system “illegal” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 158). By early 1911, these lessees were no longer responsible for overseeing the prisons (Texas Archival Resources Online).³⁵

The Building Tender System and the Pre-*Ruiz* Era: Nothing Tender About It

During the 1970s and 1980s, prisoner litigation and court intervention were at the forefront of prison reform throughout the country (Riveland, 1999), and Texas was no exception. The landmark class action lawsuit *Ruiz v. Estelle*, which was the “consolidation” of several prisoner petitions enumerating the brutal and threatening conditions in the Texas Department of Corrections, forever changed the way the Texas prison system operated.³⁶ A discussion of the *Ruiz*

³⁴ The Board of Public Labor was created by the Texas Legislature in 1866 and “directed its members to secure contracts with private interests for the use of inmate labor” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 5).

³⁵ For a comprehensive historical analysis of the Texas prison system, including the emergence and dissolution of the convict lease system, see Robert Perkinson’s *Texas Tough: The Rise of America’s Prison Empire* (2010).

³⁶ Inmate David Ruiz filed his handwritten petition in 1972 while incarcerated at the Wynne Unit, alleging brutal and inhumane conditions while assigned to the Eastham Unit, which was located in the Eastern District of Texas. Judge William Wayne Justice, the U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas, already had a professional reputation as a reform-minded “judicial activis[t]” when he “consolidated six...prisoner petitions with Ruiz’s original petition” in April 1974

case is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the prison conditions prior to and after the ruling are necessary to understanding the contextual forces influencing the emergence of Texas prison gangs.

Conditions in other state prison systems proved a harbinger of what awaited TDC (despite the fact that Texas prided itself on having a model prison system where inmates were kept in check and worked, and violence was kept to a minimum). Renaud (2002) provides a laundry list of prison systems judged unconstitutional: Arkansas State Penitentiary was declared unconstitutional in 1970 in federal district court (*Holt v. Sarvar*, 412 F.2d 304 (8th Cir. 1971), and the Mississippi system was deemed likewise in 1975 (*Gates v. Collier*, 501 F.2d 1206 (5th Cir. 1977). Alabama's medical care system was also regarded as "constitutionally inadequate" (p. xvii) in *Newman v. Alabama*, 559 F.2d 283 (5th Cir. 1977) (p. xvii). Similarly in Texas, the medical care afforded inmates was scarce on both medical and care. Certain inmates assigned to clerk jobs in the infirmary "wrote drug prescriptions, and had access to other inmates' records, and they used that access to blackmail inmates or to run scams on their families..." (Renaud, 2002, p. 28). The deprivation extended beyond inadequate health care to the lack of access to legal materials to draft appeals, with each unit establishing different rules regarding the use of such materials (Renaud, 2002, p. xvii).

The "edge of a shift" (Renaud, 2002, p. xviii) in prison legal reform began with the arrival of Frances Jalet, a prisoners' rights attorney from New York who

(Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 93). The trial began in 1978, and Judge Justice issued his memorandum opinion in December 1980. Federal oversight of TDCJ was terminated in 2002.

worked for the Legal Aid and Defender Society of Travis County (Austin, Texas), and her visits to inmate Fred Cruz in 1967. She helped file a petition “protesting the TDC rule prohibiting inmates from assisting one another in legal matters” (*Novak v. Beto*, 453 F.2d 661 [5th Cir. 1971]) (Renaud, 2002, p. xviii). Although this was denied, it offered hope to inmates that the courts no longer assumed everything in a prison system was as glorious and perfect as prison administrators wanted all to believe. Then, in 1971, prisoners received some good news in *Rocha v. Beto*, 449 F.2d 741: Denying inmates the ability to help one another with legal issues constituted a violation of their rights (Renaud, 2002, p. xviii). In response, George Beto, then-Executive Director of TDC, decided to place all of Jalet’s clients on one unit, with the expectation that isolation would prevent their writ-writing influence from becoming pervasive throughout the system. Isolating the troublemakers and ignoring natural group formation is a recurring strategy in prison management, as will be illustrated in the chapters to follow. Renaud (2002) asserts that “[o]f all the miscalculations and mistakes made by TDC officials during the *Ruiz v. Estelle* era, none was bigger than this” (p. xviii). This cohesion and forced solidarity transformed these inmates into a legal support group.

With the foundation for legal reform set, Texas inmates were primed to tackle their deplorable “living and working conditions” (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987, p. xxv), lack of access to medical care, and the “right of inmates to be free from assault and fear of assault” (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987, p. xxv), among other issues.

In 1986, *Newsweek* published an article chronicling the brutality of the unchecked lawlessness within the Texas prison system, a system that, to sustain order, had become rife with violence at the hands of the untouchable male inmates, overwhelmingly White, known as “building tenders” (Press, 1986). These inmates had full reign of their cellblocks under the guise of maintaining order and served as de facto guards (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987; Press, 1986). Building tenders were not subject to the same rules and regulations as other inmates; they were knowingly allowed to carry weapons, and their cell doors remain unlocked so they could administer beatings and other warnings to inmates at their – and the correctional staff’s – discretion. They were even called upon to provide medical care and “perform minor surgery” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 77), often without the use of anesthesia, despite no diplomas or medical school attendance on their rap sheets. During this time, TDC lacked a real classification system, according to a warden who was a correctional officer on the frontlines during the building tender reign: “We had a building tender system and everyone was housed according to jobs. It didn’t have anything to do with custody. We didn’t have custody. An inmate was an inmate” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). Without classification, administration needed to keep the huddled, incarcerated masses safe and in line somehow. Building tenders provided the *somehow*.

Despite TDC’s claims that the system was relatively benign and that the building tenders “were merely used for such mundane duties as keeping the cell blocks clean” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 50), evidence to the contrary had been mounting. One prisoner “had allegedly been scalded when building tenders

threw hot water on him for making noise” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 49); this offender was fatally assaulted by other building tenders when he called out for medical care. Reports of sexual assaults perpetrated by building tenders were not uncommon (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987), and building tenders allegedly received “no disciplinary action” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 124) from prison officials for their conduct. They were indeed the violent, golden children of the prison. Select prison security staff were complicit in these assaults, even if their participation was little more than a conspiratorial smile or smirk at a beating well done (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987).

The use of building tenders, however, was not specific to Texas.³⁷ Renaud (2002) says it was “common in the South” (p. 83) to use other inmates to maintain order and oversee other offenders, as understaffed units depended on them as extra eyes and ears for correctional officers and guards. According to one Texas warden,

When you fully understand how the building tender system worked, it was a head building tender who had building tenders underneath him, and underneath them were porters – they were the ones who cleaned – so the building tenders controlled it. So what you end up having is now you have

³⁷ Nor is it specific to the United States. “Autogobierno,” or self-rule, is the sanitized euphemism applied to the prison management style of 37% of prisons in Mexico, according to a National Human Rights Commission report (Agren, 2011). (According to news reports in late 2012, Mexico’s human rights commission increased that estimate to “60 percent of the country’s 430 prisons or jails [as being] controlled by criminal elements” [“Six in 10 Mexican prisons ‘self governed’ by gangs,” 2012]). At a prison in Saltillo, Mexico, members of the violent Los Zetas drug cartel “run” the facility, and, under self-rule’s informal guidelines, are “permitted to manage internal functions ‘such as controlling keys, organizing activities (and) cleaning and overseeing dormitories’” (Agren, 2011). For the Zetas, the key to “managing internal functions” and maintaining order is through “intimidation and violence” (Agren, 2011). With control come additional perks: They reportedly have access to cellphones, “recently installed air conditioning...[and] even opened a strip joint that serves shots of whiskey under the Los Zetas brand” (Agren, 2011).

a correctional officer that looks in on the wing, like one wing had 60 inmates on it, but of those 60, 25 of them were part of the building tender system. So you had 25 guards, so to speak, watching those other guys and controlling their activities, and they knew what was going on, and they had snitches, and so they had a better network because there were so many of them....And they had some pretty strict controls. It was immediate swift action, so there was a fear, respect kind of thing that developed, and it kept it in line (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The building tender ideology of the day? According to then-captain Keith Price of the Eastham Unit (who later became a warden at the Darrington Unit): “To put it in sociological terms, we co-opted a group of the sub-culture and, through that, we controlled behavior. We re-enforced it with a kick in the ass or a slap upside the head” (Press, 1986).

Post-Ruiz: The Vacuum Cometh

When Judge William Wayne Justice, Chief U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas,³⁸ issued his lengthy memo in 1980, the conditions in the Texas prison system – including “the unlawful use of building tenders, inadequate medical care, harassment by TDC officials for legal activities, and unlawful confinement in punitive segregation” (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 92) – were officially declared unconstitutional. The transition from TDC-sanctioned bully (building tender) to TDC-organized crime bully (prison gang member) as a result of *Ruiz* was not completely unexpected, except perhaps to prison administration. Judge Justice had forewarned the chain of command that gangs would emerge in the building tenders’ absence if guards were not

³⁸ The State requested – and was granted – a change of venue for *Ruiz v. Estelle*. The case was heard in Houston, which is in the Southern Judicial District of Texas, and Judge Justice, “to TDC’s horror, followed the case” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 273) there.

immediately hired to fill those vacancies (Hyde, 2008; Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987; Perkinson, 2010). A warden who was a major at the time witnessed this firsthand:

[The courts] actually predicted if we did not hire staff members quickly and get them into place, a vacuum would exist. Of course, the [TDC] hierarchy at the time [thought], "We know everything. You can't tell us crap about prisons. *We are* the leader in prisons," and sure enough they waited several years because when they got rid of the building tender system, it was still me and the lieutenant and another officer working the hallway to control that entire population (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The prison wardens in the post-building tender system era were unable to see or acknowledge how building tenders and inmates viewed one another; all inmates were not equal, with the building tenders more equal than others. Once dismantled, prison wardens thought the building tender system issue had been settled, especially as it related to the release of the tenders back into the general prison population, having them assume the role of just-another-inmate, and fending for themselves against the inevitable retaliation from the non-building tender offenders they had previously "supervised" and disciplined.

[S]ome of our old guard, we were saying, "This guy here, he's running, he's recruiting," but because he was a building tender and because he put in those years and was dedicated to the warden, there was some of that false loyalty that was still given to the guy [on behalf of the warden and administration]. They'd say, "Oh, I know old Baker, he's all right, he's been a building tender for eight, ten years...." But Baker's sitting down there saying, "*They* threw me to the wolves. *They're* saying I can't be a building tender...*they* took my knives, *they* took my clubs, *they* took my authority, and now I've got these convicts looking at me like, 'You ain't crap now,' so I've got to protect myself." So he thinks, "I've been abandoned by the warden." So it wasn't seen the same way, and the next thing you know... (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Despite the necessity for dismantling the building tender system, the ensuing power vacuum worsened conditions for the general inmate. White (2003) contends that the “highest levels of prison gang violence usually occur when there is a break or vacuum in this leadership, and various individuals or factions struggle for control” (p. 5-3). Judge Justice foresaw the emergence of organized gangs to fill this void (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987; Press, 1986). By the mid-1970s, Texas gang members transferred from the California prison system had already infiltrated TDC and began to establish a foothold among prison rackets (Press, 1986), but it was not until the building tender aftermath that gangs became big business and a staple of prison life in Texas. A warden with correctional officer hindsight laid out the evolution of the gangs within the system:

The birthplace of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas [ABT] occurred at Ramsey I [a unit in Rosharon, Texas] during my tenure there. When I look back on it, a lot of these names, a lot of them were our building tenders. All these big high-ranking guys, when we started locking them up were our building tenders. Texas Syndicate and Aryan Brotherhood and Mexican Mafia...there were only five or six real gangs back then, but they weren't disruptive. They tried to run their own enterprise within the scope of their jobs. ABT developed because they saw that the Hispanics had their little gangs. The Blacks didn't really have much of a gang; they just kinda got together as groups, and the Whites were looking for something to bring themselves together. Now the Texas Mafia [White prison gang] specifically developed to be an organized enterprise....So early on they existed solely to finance other crimes. Even though we had the building tender system – of course that's no longer allowed – they had liberties. They had homosexual inmates to take care of them and do this and do that, so some of the White inmates said, “We're not going to get 'punked out,' we're not going to be forced by the building tender system to do that (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

When administration initiated its policy of segregating gang members in the mid-1980s, it became apparent that many of those identified as “high-ranking guys” also wore the label of building tender years earlier (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The Vacuum Arriveth: Cleaning House

The reasons for the rise in prison gangs parallel the reasons for the rise in gangs in the community: rapid population growth (in this case, prison expansion) creates instability (that is, offenders vie for power and the need to get more than what the system provides; and younger inmates upset the balance and the entrenched codes and norms responsible for maintaining order among prisoners), along with the need to establish norms and social structures that conform to an individual’s view of the world. In a 1985 *60 Minutes* segment, a building tender identified as “Fulton” assessed the situation, explaining that because the *Ruiz* decision “took the police out of the system,” the only way to decrease the violence was through “respect and fear” (Glauber), which is what offenders know and expect. The emergence of gangs was not rocket science, but rather an expectation where only the names and faces of a few changed. According to a ranking member of the Texas Syndicate during this upheaval, “You had building tenders who were beating up on inmates....It was a protection thing, to help each other out” (Timms, 2001). But with the removal of the building tenders and the appearance of the prison gangs, the gangs “started doing the same thing the building tenders...used to do,’ [the Texas Syndicate member] said. ‘They started taking advantage of people, killing people, getting into extortion, bringing in drugs’” (Timms, 2001).

And then the blood flowed. In 1984, the Texas prison system reported 25 homicides and 404 stabbings (Associated Press, 1985, "Prison gangs want peace treaty"), and 1985 outshone the previous year with 27 gang-related homicides (Glauber, 1985), including a "triple stabbing involving the Texas Syndicate and the [Texas] Mexican Mafia" (Perkinson, 2010, p. 314). The continued bloodshed precipitated the introduction of a policy to place identified prison gang members in administrative segregation (Associated Press, 1985, "Prison gangs want peace treaty"). Although the use of segregation was not originally implemented as a permanent solution (Glauber, 1985), over the past 25 years, the policy has become as institutionalized as the inmates the state governs.

Prison life post-*Ruiz* was made more unpredictable for both inmates and staff alike, as the focus shifted from controlling prisoners to cleaning the administrative house and playing supervisory hopscotch, at least according to a present-day warden who was tasked with identifying gang members during this time:

Then we got Mr. [Raymond] Procnier [as Executive Director] to come in from California, and none of the Texas people trusted him....Procnier would take that [state] plane, and he'd fly and visit these units. At the time we were so small, every unit had a landing strip, so he'd land. First time he ever did that, he called a staff meeting and says, "Under my executive authority as Director, you're fired, you're fired, you're fired," and just wiped out the unit. Firing everyone. Procnier said he had to do this to get everyone to understand what [he] was doing. Well, word got around on the unit, so every time that plane took off from Huntsville, they'd call and the wardens would say, "I'm not on the unit," and they'd take off. He showed up at Ramsey [prison in Rosharon] one time and said, "Where's the warden?" "We don't know." "What do you mean you don't know? Where'd he go?" "He's the warden. He don't tell us." So he'd say, "Well,

I'm gonna wait." And the warden would call, and they'd say, "The director's still here waiting on you," and he'd say, "Okay," and he wouldn't come back to the unit. Ultimately he fired everybody he wanted to fire and put a note on the warden's door: "You're fired. Give me a call whenever you get back." [...He] said we had a good ol' boy system in Texas that would never correct itself without getting rid of that influence. At the time he did all that, the morale sank. No one trusted Huntsville....[We] turned everybody's attention to "I wonder if you're going to get fired...." Every time you got called up front, you thought, "They're fixing to fire me." It wasn't "here's your disciplinary, here's your due process." It was "as the Director of the Texas Department of Corrections, I have the authority to dismiss you. You're fired." And he used that very heavy handedly. You'd have guys that had been in corrections for 20-25 years, made a career of it, it's all they'd ever done. Next thing you know, they're not demoted to [correctional officer] – "you're fired." So then we turn our attention off of the inmates. Not only do we have the vacuum, then we put the tension on it, next thing you know, we wake up and ask, "What kind of mess are we in" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007)?

This question was answered with a system-wide lockdown in 1986 and the edict to identify every inmate believed to be a gang member, as prison administration finally had to admit a gang problem existed, and "we're losing control" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). Ten years later, the prison system formally created its Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) to manage, monitor and track prison gangs and their members throughout its facilities.

What seemed like administration's logical response to the crisis – isolate the gang leaders – was not so logical to those officers who had to identify them:

Warden S.B.: [Administration] wanted the leaders; they thought if we cut off the head of the snake that would solve the problem. But we told them it's not one leader and a bunch of followers. It's a structure; they'd structured themselves [along] paramilitary [lines]. Like with the Mexican Mafia, "I'm a general, here's the majors, the captains..."

Interviewer (Author): That doesn't sound any different than what the building tenders were doing.

Warden S.B.: Yeah, if you took the head building tender and he moved to another unit, one of his building tenders would step up and be the head building tender. So while we were wondering what we were going to do, they developed their own system (personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The inmates reacted to the policy changes and internal agency turmoil over leadership and managed to stay a step ahead, dancing around a checkmate.

Post-*Ruiz* Examination: Monday Morning Quarterbacking

Inmates, correctional staff and administration were forced to put the Humpty Dumpty-esque system back together again. How were they able to do this, to transform an unconstitutionally yet very structured existence (i.e., the building tender system in terms of adhering to the inmates' unspoken rules and codes, a structure with which each side was familiar and accustomed, and knew exactly what to expect for any transgression) to one that was judicial-reform-induced and unknown?

In the aftermath of *Ruiz*, who shouldered the greatest responsibility for the rise in gang activity? Dilulio (1990), an advocate of former TDC Director George Beto's individualistic management style, declared TDC a model system prior to court intervention, attributing control as key to prison management. In *Courts, Corrections and the Constitution: The Impact of Judicial Intervention on Prisons and Jails*, Dilulio (1990) places blame on Judge Justice for the ensuing violence and advises the system return to a control model sans building tenders. Ekland-Olson and Martin (1990) challenge Dilulio's interpretation of fact and classify *Ruiz* as a "struggle over legitimacy;" that is, are the mandates set forth in the *Ruiz* opinion seen as legitimate and justifiable? The court found abuse and unconstitutional conditions, yet the prison system interpreted these as order and

control (Ekland-Olson & Martin, 1990). They characterize *Ruiz* as a “challenge to a way of life, to a sense of place, belonging, and control” (p. 78). One cannot ignore context when looking at how Texas prisons functioned pre-*Ruiz*. The Eastham Unit, the prison where Ruiz had been incarcerated and whose conditions were the basis for his petition, is located in East Texas – Lovelady – and operated as a slave state. Therefore, the reality of inmates being treated as slave labor and subjected to brutality would not raise concerns for the greater community or be viewed as extreme, and, because inmates knew their place in the system’s hierarchy, openly questioning the use of corporal punishment – and the inevitable retaliation for voicing any complaint – was not an option. Mainstream media, however, placed partial blame on “[f]ederal prison reform” (“Organised crime: Out of jail and on to the street,” 1998) (including cell desegregation, as addressed in *Lamar v. Coffield*³⁹) without acknowledging the

³⁹ Texas prisons were segregated by race until 1965, even though the Texas Legislature in 1927 statutorily mandated racial segregation in its prisons (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 80). During then-TDC Director Dr. George Beto’s tenure (1962-1972), prison *units* were desegregated; however, individual cells, cellblocks and work assignments remained segregated by race (Marquart & Trulson, 2006; Trulson & Marquart, 2002). It was not until September 1991 when TDCJ began to comply with the 1977 consent decree in *Lamar v. Coffield* to integrate double cells and living quarters, thus increasing racial tension (Marquart & Trulson, 2006; Trulson & Marquart, 2002). (The case began in 1972, and in 1977 a settlement was reached that “require[d] the TDC to implement an affirmative action plan to eliminate segregation in housing and job assignments” [Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987, p. 256]). James Marquart has written extensively on the topic of TDC’s desegregation and why, despite his “own ‘theoretical framework,’ a riot should have commenced” (Marquart, 2008, p. 156) but did not. Attributing the relative non-violent ease with which the process was implemented to “effective leadership, effective communication in the form of announcements to the inmate population, controlled implementation, and the idea that in-cell integration was going to take place no matter what” (Marquart, 2008, p. 156), the *expectation* was that there would be no violence. It had not been done before, but that did not mean it *should* not be done. Marquart and Trulson (2006) also note that cellmate integration decisions were not made haphazardly; rather, inmates were “paired...according to objective criteria, such as height, weight, and age” in order to “‘equalize status’ within double cells” (p. 4). Race, though, was not a factor. They attribute Texas’s success with racial desegregation to the fact that “violent and disruptive inmates” who are responsible for the “majority of institutional trouble” are already segregated (p. 5) and, therefore, removed from

prison administration's response to these changes and its reluctance to abide by Judge Justice's ruling (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987).⁴⁰

Building Tenders: Prison Relic or Reincarnation?

Even decades after the use of building tenders was abolished in the Texas prison system, they more recently have been an integral, if not formally acknowledged, part of one of the largest prison systems, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Although referred to as "peacekeepers" to imply a kinder and gentler inmate, its name belies their less-than-tender responsibilities. On January 10, 2005, Manuel Gonzalez, Jr., a correctional officer at the California Institution for Men in Chino, was stabbed to death by Jon Christopher Blaylock, a "high-ranking gang [member] serving as [peacemaker]" (Marquez & Thompson, 2006) to quash the potential for racially-motivated assaults. The report from the California Office of the Inspector General (2005) uncovered a multitude of security violations leading to the officer's death, exposing that he "routinely allowed Blaylock, in particular, to move about unsupervised on the...tiers to calm other Black inmates and relieve racial tensions because he believed him to be a 'shot caller'" (p. 34). One witness recalled seeing Blaylock

out on the tier running the tier for his people doing favors and that it was a common practice. [The witness] was curious about why Officer Gonzalez

the desegregation equation. On the surface, no riot ensued, but the lingering effects of integrating the races in cells shed light on one glaring aspect of prison life – race. Cells could be integrated, but race was and remains a defining characteristic of prison life.

⁴⁰ Judge Justice, in an interview granted in 2002, reiterated that the "court gave the state ample time to replace the building tenders with officers,...[but prison administration] refused to take advantage" (Perkinson, 2010, p. 360). He did concede that although TDCJ had yet "to become a truly rehabilitative instrument,...the most revolting aspects were abolished in the case [he] tried" (Perkinson, 2010, p. 360).

was inside the tier area with Blaylock out because usually when the inmates were out on the tier the officers were always on the other side of the bars (p. 35).

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The original prison gangs that developed as a result of the confluence of events of judicial reform, TDC's reluctance to admit that maybe they did not have all of the answers, the lack of correctional staff, the inherent racial tension, and the power struggle among inmates initially seemed content with operating "their own enterprises within the scope of their jobs...and weren't disruptive" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). But, as mentioned earlier, the cleaning-house approach of new prison management after the building tender system was dismantled generated new concerns and problems. The promotion of administrators who lacked "hallway...[and] inmate experience" to prison wardens led to the failure of some units, according to one warden:

The thing about controlling a prison, if you show control, knowledge of what's going on, the inmates have confidence that you know what you're doing. But if you let a maximum security facility display to the inmate population that the warden doesn't know what's going on, and they don't have the gumption to do whatever, that's going to create...anarchy...on this side because there's no more respect for the administration. We had a problem with that in the '80s and '90s when they started promoting administrators who had no hallway experience, no inmate experience, and only had eight or nine years in the system, and making them head wardens, and we're supposed to go to them? And they were so hesitant and didn't know what we were talking about, or couldn't fathom what we were talking about. A lot of those people aren't around anymore. The failure of a lot of units was because that administration up front didn't have a clue...and I worked for a couple of them. [Laughs] There's so many different factors that go into [it]...that's what makes it such a complicated issue. You can't just say, "If you lock them up, your problem will be solved." Then we would've solved this problem a long time ago (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

With this “clueless” mindset, the atmosphere was ripe for the gang evolution and violence that ensued.

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the context through which to interpret the rise of prison gangs in the Texas prison system, beginning with a brief overview of the goals of the criminal justice system and incarceration. The history of the Texas prison system and the impact judicial intervention and oversight had on the emergence of prison gangs are critical to understanding where the prison system is today in terms of prison gang management. The policies created to curb the tide of inmate violence in the 1980s as a result of the demise of the building tender system unintentionally created a seismic wave of new offender management strategies: the increased use of segregation for identified prison gang members, the psychological deterioration associated with solitary confinement, and the reality of prison gang members being released to their communities straight from segregation without the benefit of programming offered to other prisoners. How the Texas prison system responded to this trade-off – physical war among prison gang members left in general population versus the internal war of the psyche of those ordered to indefinite solitary confinement – and the implications for transforming an existing prison culture are the subject of the chapters to follow.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Predators prey. It’s what they do.”

–Special Agent C.D. (retired), California Department of
Corrections and Rehabilitation, Special Services Unit

Having examined the conditions necessary to foster prison gang development inside a closed and changing system, it is necessary to look at the nature of prison gangs and differentiate them from contemporary street gangs. This section will not be an all-inclusive treatise on the current state of gangs and characteristics of gang members, but rather an exercise to reveal not only the underlying cultures that shape their lives, but also the relationship between prison and street gangs and the continuum they both share.⁴¹ The prison gang culture, institutional violence, and prison gang characteristics will be discussed in terms of how they differ from those of street gangs in order to establish the foundation for the subsequent sections of the chapter, which include prison gang management policy and administrative responses to dealing with prison gangs; the increased reliance on segregating identified prison gang members and placing them in solitary confinement for the duration of their sentences, and the consequences of these policies; and the potential for resocialization of prison

⁴¹ Although no universal definition for a “street gang” or “criminal street gang” exists, several common characteristics are attributed to most street gangs, including having a name, using common signs or symbols, individuals associating with one another, having a leader, claiming a territory or turf, and engaging in criminal activity (National Gang Center, 2009). In Texas, a “criminal street gang” is statutorily-defined as “three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities” (Article 71.01(d), Texas Penal Code). For the purposes of this study, prison gangs, or Security Threat Groups, are differentiated from street gangs primarily in their origins; that is, prison gangs originate in prison and typically in response to the need for individual protection from other predatory groups. The definition of Security Threat Groups will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

gang members within the institutional setting. Prison officials must confront layer upon layer of competing cultures (including, but not limited to, street, street gang, prison, inmate, and prison gang cultures, and within the prison gang culture, the additional layer of membership rank, such as leader versus soldier and young member versus veteran) that impact and impede changing the norms, values and beliefs of offenders, and prove resocialization to be that much more difficult for the prison gang member to achieve while incarcerated. The remainder of the chapter will address the theoretical basis for resocialization in the prison setting, examining the various cultures and institutional context that present obstacles to prisoner resocialization and its potential for success.

GANGS IN GENERAL: STREET VERSUS PRISON

Data from the National Longitudinal Youth Survey 1997 (NLYS97) revealed that 8% of 17-year-olds reported they had been involved in a gang, with 7% of White, 12% of African-American, and 12% of Hispanic youth acknowledging participation in a gang (as reported in Snyder & Sickmund, 2006, "Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national report," p. 70). The *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment: Emerging Trends*, an assessment based on information from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, correctional agencies, the National Drug Intelligence Center,⁴² the National Gang Center, and

⁴² According to its Web site, the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) was legislatively-mandated in October 1992 (see Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1993, at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d102:H.R.5504:>) and became operational in August 1993. Its primary responsibilities were to "coordinate and consolidate drug intelligence from all national security and law enforcement agencies, and produce information regarding the structure, membership, finances, communications, and activities of drug trafficking organizations." Only a text box on the site informs visitors of NDIC's demise, effective June 15, 2012. See <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/index.htm> for historical information and archived NDIC publications.

open source information, estimated the number of gang members at 1.4 million (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011, p. 9)⁴³ – an increase of 400,000 from its 2009 assessment (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2009) – with approximately 231,000 of those as documented gang members incarcerated in federal and state prisons (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011, p. 29).⁴⁴ These numbers, and membership listed in other studies, may be fallible and deceptive, as no consensus or standard definition exists for the terms “gang-related,” “gang-involved” or “gang-motivated,” or how agencies identify and monitor gang-related crime and documented gang members, and these differences impact the number of potential gang crimes reported (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997, “Urban street gang enforcement”). “Gang-related” crimes are often defined as crimes that involve a gang member, whether he or she is the perpetrator or victim, “regardless of motivation or circumstances” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997, “Urban street gang enforcement,” p. 30). “Gang-motivated” crimes encompass those committed in furtherance of the gang, whether they are to protect territory (in a neighborhood or prison yard) or to maintain the gang’s reputation (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997, “Urban street gang enforcement,” p. 30), and “[yield] significantly fewer gang crimes than [do] gang related” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997, “Urban street gang enforcement,” p. 31). “Gang-related” widens the net considerably. Finally, “gang-involved” crimes are a variance on the familiar “gang-related” theme. The

⁴³ This number represents street, prison and outlaw motorcycle gang (OMG) members.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that this number represents all gang member in prisons, as no distinction was made between “prison gang members in prison” and “street gang members in prison.” Additionally, data from only 32 states were reported (p. 10).

consistency and manner in which gang crimes are classified will result in fluctuating tallies. For example, comparisons made between the incidence of gang violence and total membership in Texas from previous years and the present may indicate a substantial decrease in gang activity and the number of individual members; however, these rates were based on two antithetical definitions. Texas legislative changes in September 1999 made the label of “gang member” more restrictive in how law enforcement collected and maintained gang member information in intelligence databases. Prior to these changes in September 1999, if an individual self-admitted to being in a gang – “Yeah, officer, I claim Five Deuce Crips” – he could be documented as a gang member for the purpose of being entered into a criminal intelligence database.⁴⁵ After September 1999, a self-admission alone was no longer sufficient for an individual to be added to “total gang membership” in an intelligence database. Any estimate today is likely to be low-balled, and comparisons made to earlier numbers in an effort to gauge the level of present gang activity, or to see if gangs are on the wax or wane, would be an irresponsible comparison. In September 2009, the Texas Legislature again modified the gang member database submission criteria.⁴⁶ Regardless of the number of members and prevalence of criminal activity at the hands of gang members, this study’s focus is on moving

⁴⁵ A report in the *Austin American-Statesman* in 1998 referenced testimony during the Texas Senate committee on gangs purporting Texas home to “145,000 members in 3,276 prison and street gangs...” (Ward, 1998, “Special report: The growth of Texas prison gangs”).

⁴⁶ See Article 61.02, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, which expanded the submission criteria used to document gang members for inclusion in a law enforcement database, effective September 1, 2009.

beyond the gangs' allure and their promises of protection, identity and solidarity to relinquishing the physical and psychological hold on their members.

Prison Gang Research: The “Where’s Waldo” of Empirical Study

The legacy of gang research began with juveniles and street gangs in Frederick Thrasher’s 1927 work, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. But research on prison gangs is scant in comparison, perhaps due to the impression that once convicted and incarcerated, prison will either magically and fundamentally “change” the offender or curtail his opportunities for criminal activity. To illustrate this lack of research on prison gangs, their connections to local street and youth gangs and, now, organized crime and Mexican drug cartels, two paragraphs are devoted to “prison gangs” in Huff’s *Gangs in America III*, a 2002 anthology of essays on contemporary gangs.⁴⁷ Street gangs get books; prison gangs get a stray paragraph.⁴⁸

Despite the comparative limited research on prison gangs, one thing is known about both prison and street gangs: Whether membership is sought inside or outside of the prison walls, the primary reasons for joining do not differ – protection, identity, a sense of belonging, substitute family and brotherhood, opportunities for financial gain, or a simple adrenaline rush all offer prospective members what they believe is absent from their lives. This next section will

⁴⁷ Interspersed throughout some of the text are prison gang-related sentences about leaving the gang while in prison (for example, see page 52).

⁴⁸ Texas prison gangs, however, have been the subject of doctoral dissertations, including Fong (1987) and Ralph (1992). Fong compared the organizational and structural characteristics of the two largest Hispanic prison gangs in TDC at the time, the Texas Syndicate and Texas Mexican Mafia, to assess their activities, recruitment, leadership and goals. Ralph offered a profile of Texas prison gang violence that erupted in the aftermath of the demise of the building tender system.

examine those characteristics common to prison gang membership; street gangs will be addressed only in terms of how they intersect with and differ from prison gangs. The focus remains on prison gangs to reveal the heightened effect of being a member of such a group, as opposed to being a run-of-the-mill street gang member whose lifelong commitment to the gang is not an oath-based expectation.

Level of Violence and Violence Attributed to Prison Gangs

The level of violence attributed to prison gangs often justifies how they are managed in the correctional setting, including the need to handle them differently from other offenders, even street gang members, based on their propensity for violence and bloodshed. The following section addresses the sometimes conflicting reports about the true incidence of prison gang-related violence and the problems inherent in classifying such activity.

The *2005 National Gang Threat Assessment*, a federally-funded study of the gang landscape as reported by law enforcement throughout the country, concluded that, despite the dearth of information on prison gangs,

[b]oth prisons and jails reported substantially more STG-related incidents of violence against inmates than against staff members. Likewise, in both prisons and jails, approximately one-third of all violent incidents were STG-related, whether directed against staff or inmates (National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, 2005, p. 6).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Data for this report came from a 2002 National Major Gang Task Force (NMGTF) survey. According to its Web site, the NMGTF is a non-profit organization “committed to providing leadership and information within the criminal justice system and other stakeholders to minimize the effects of security threat groups, gangs and terrorists in jails, prisons and communities.” (See Web site: <http://nmgtf.org/index.html>).

Nafekh and Stys (2004) assessed differences between 1,955 gang-affiliated offenders and non-affiliated offenders in the Canadian prison system, looking at their potential for reintegration and motivation for intervention (i.e., does the offender assume responsibility for his actions; does he express a desire to change his behavior; and does he have intact support systems of family and friends to aid in his change), among other variables. Differentiating among outlaw motorcycle, street, traditional organized crime,⁵⁰ Asian, and prison gangs,⁵¹ they found that gang-affiliated offenders were significantly more likely to be involved in inmate and staff assaults and possess contraband (primarily alcohol and drugs) than their non-gang-affiliated counterparts (p. 34).⁵² Prison gang members, characterized as “much younger” (p. 27) than their non-gang-affiliated matched offenders in the study (except for street gang members who also wore the “much younger” label), were more likely to be not only serving sentences for violent offenses (p. 30), but also “directly involved on assaults on inmates [and] staff, and in alcohol seizures” (p. 43).⁵³ In their study on the effects of gang affiliation on “violent misconduct” during the first three years of an

⁵⁰ The authors noted that the terms “gang” and “organized criminal organization” were used synonymously in their research. The two definitions are on a continuum, with “organized crime” implying a greater magnitude of criminal activity than that conducted by “gangs;” however, each group engages in similar activities (2004, p. i).

⁵¹ Approximately 68% of the motorcycle, traditional organized crime, and prison gang-affiliated offenders in the study were White. The gang subtypes studied included 46.6% motorcycle, 24.5% street, 17.7% traditional organized crime, 8.5% Asian, and 2.8% prison gang. All gang affiliations were derived from the Correctional Service of Canada’s offender database and based on information received by prison intelligence officers and ultimately confirmed by prison administration. However, the offender database did not distinguish between confirmed and suspected gang members; that is, verified members and associates were included in the study, and it did not take into account the level of involvement with and loyalty to the gang.

⁵² The authors selected non-affiliated offenders from a random sample of individuals admitted to the federal prison system during the same time frame as the gang-affiliated, and matched them based on race and ethnicity.

⁵³ This study did not control for age when examining its role in the degree of violence.

offender's incarceration, Griffin and Hepburn (2006) also concluded that gang-affiliated inmates had a greater likelihood of engaging in violent misconduct, such as assaults, fights, threats and weapons offenses, than did non-gang-affiliated offenders during the first three years of their incarceration.⁵⁴ Examining the incidence of violent misconduct among approximately 2,100 male Arizona inmates who were at least three years into their sentence,⁵⁵ they found significant differences among non-gang-, street gang- and prison gang-affiliated offenders as they pertained to the likelihood of committing assault, fighting, making threats, or possessing weapons during their early incarceration. While 8.4% of their sample was classified as "suspected or confirmed prison gang members," and 8.3% as street gang members, they discovered that 47.5% of prison gang members and 41.1% of street gang members in their sample were found guilty of committing at least one of the aforementioned violent offenses (assaults, fights, threats or weapons possession). Only 24.9% of non-gang-affiliated inmates were found guilty of similar misconduct. Even when controlling for "age, ethnicity, commitment offense, prior incarceration, sentence length, and security level" (p. 443), gang-affiliated inmates, which included both street and prison gang members, were more than twice as likely as their non-affiliated counterparts to engage in assaults during their first three years in prison. Like Nafekh and

⁵⁴ When measuring the number of "violent misconduct" incidents, Griffin and Hepburn (2006) used "conservative measure[s]" (p. 431) to minimize "misconduct" selection bias and used only those incidents that were reviewed by a prison committee that rendered a "finding of guilt" (p. 431).

⁵⁵ Griffin and Hepburn (2006) focused on these first three years of incarceration, as that is the period during which offenders undergo an "adjustment to prison life" (p. 420).

Stys, Griffin and Hepburn do cite one limitation of their study; “causal order” between gang affiliation and violent misconduct was not determined.

In 1998, a National Public Radio report quoted TDCJ prison officials attributing “75 percent of the violence” to prison gangs (Burnett & Siegel, “Race relations in Texas prisons”). Brian Parry, former Assistant Director of the Law Enforcement Unit for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, stated that prison gang members in California “contributed to” approximately 75% of the violence in his system’s facilities (National Institute of Corrections, 2000, “Correctional strategies in gang management”). A 2009 study conducted by the Washington State Department of Corrections revealed that although 20% of its offenders were classified as gang members, they were responsible for 45% of all “violent infractions” (Lewis, 2010).⁵⁶ Cunningham and Sorensen (2007), in their examination of the disciplinary records of approximately 24,500 “high-security confinement” (p. 243), close-custody male inmates housed in the Florida Department of Corrections, did not assign a percentage of violence to prison gang members, but they did conclude that prison gang members were “35% more likely to commit violent acts than their counterparts” (p. 248).⁵⁷ Although age was the “strongest predictor of violence potential” (p. 246) – with younger inmates more prone to misconduct – prior incarceration, shorter prison

⁵⁶ It is unknown if these figures represent “prison gang members” or “street gang members in prison.” The results have also been reported as 18% of Washington State’s prison population being gang members who were responsible for 43% of violent misconduct (Chan, 2009; Dininny, 2009).

⁵⁷ Suspected and confirmed prison gang members represented 5% of the total sample (n = 1,234).

sentences, and prison gang affiliation were all consistent with “increased rates” (p. 250) of assault.

Byrne and Hummer (2007), however, contend that research attributing “the influence of gangs on both community and institutional violence and disorder has been exaggerated” (p. 538). Citing Cilluffo and Saathoff (2006), they reveal “no current empirical evidence” indicating a connection between Security Threat Groups and prison violence (Byrne & Hummer, 2007, p. 538). However, Marquart and Trulson (2006) identified TDCJ’s policy of segregating “incorrigible, violent and gang-related inmates in single cells” (p. 4), which began in the mid-1980s, as a possible reason for why less than 3% of racial violence in Texas prison was classified as gang-related. It may be that the removal of these violent inmates from the general population accounted for the reported lower levels of violence in Texas prisons.

So how much violence in prisons can be attributed to prison gang members? This is a tricky question to answer, as off-the-cuff responses from those who have worked for TDCJ acknowledge “most of it” (P.F., personal communication, February 10, 2006), but this also depends on how individual correctional officials label violent incidents. For example, an episode where a prison gang member engages in self-injurious behavior may be counted as “gang-related,” despite the fact that this idiosyncratic act was not done in furtherance of the gang or as a result of an ongoing rivalry with another group. Classifying acts or activity with little relevance to the gang as “gang-related,” even in the institutional setting, can be problematic, providing skewed data on the

true level of gang violence, just as it does for law enforcement tasked with capturing incidents of gang violence in the free world.

Regardless of the amount of crime at the hands of prison gang members, one certainty is known: A hint of overkill is a signature among their crimes. In the free world, beheadings, torched bodies, and the occasional bagged torso washed up on the beach are the handiwork of prison gang members – those who have already been released or who have orchestrated such acts from prison – whose victims' deaths reflect the same murderous methods as those of Mexican drug cartels.⁵⁸ For example, during the mid-1980s when prison gang violence erupted in the Texas correctional system, incarcerated members of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas “would stab somebody 20, 30, 40 times just to try and send a message that ‘Hey, we are a bad group’” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). In March 1985, a “portable television camera” caught an inmate “hack[ing] repeatedly” another offender at a Texas Department of Corrections’ facility in Rosharon, Texas (Toth, 1986, “Inmate takes stand”). Prosecutors believed this “ordered” hit was conducted not only to ensure the offender’s membership into the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, but also to “[retaliate] for a statement [the victim] gave authorities implicating another gang

⁵⁸ In December 2003, the dismembered body of a leader of *Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos* (HPL), a Hispanic-based prison gang in Texas, washed up in Galveston Bay, the result of an ordered “hit,” or murder, from inside the organization. His arms, legs and head had been severed (George, 2008, “HPD links Mexico cartel to Houston”). In September 2000, three HPL members in San Antonio shot to death two adult males and an adult female in what authorities labeled a “bad drug deal” (“Man sentenced to life in prisons [sic] for killing, burning three people,” 2002). One of the victims was an alleged member of the Texas Mexican Mafia. The three HPL members then wrapped the victims’ bodies in carpet, dumped them along an isolated road in Frio County, and set them on fire. Two of the offenders were sentenced to life in prison, with the third receiving the death penalty (“Man sentenced to life,” 2002).

member” in an earlier killing (Toth, 1986, “Inmate takes stand”).⁵⁹ Although distinct from the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, the Aryan Brotherhood in California, which was founded in 1964 in San Quentin State Prison, “killed lots of people in the most hideous ways possible” (Duersten, 2005).⁶⁰ The drive-by mentality of the younger street gang member who may or may not hit his intended target but will undoubtedly hit someone, *anyone*, does not fare as well in the prison setting where access to “cleaner” methods of attack are not available. Assaults in prison are personal and messy, and the messier they are, the more serious the message sent.

Researchers have long acknowledged differences between prison, street and youth gangs (Fleisher & Decker, 2001, “An overview of the challenge of prison gangs”). As previously mentioned, prison gang members’ willingness to use extreme violence as a first resort to problem-solving, and their motivation to establish sustainable organized criminal enterprises, regardless of personal cost, reveal a unique culture that manifests itself in the way members conduct themselves based upon age, race and ethnicity, mentality and belief system. These characteristics will be explored in the next section.

⁵⁹ During the trial, the defendant denied being a member of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, adding, “I don’t know of such a gang” (Toth, 1986, “Inmate takes stand”). At the time of the murder, this offender was nearing the end of a nine-year sentence for a burglary in Harris County (Toth, 1986, “Inmate takes stand”). After more than two decades in Ad Seg as a result of the conviction for this murder and subsequent confirmation as an STG member, this defendant finally renounced the gang and was eventually placed back in general population (Schiller, 2011, “Some prisoners in solitary for years in Texas”).

⁶⁰ The 110-page indictment charging more than 20 of California’s Aryan Brotherhood (AB) members under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act alleged that more than 32 murders in California state prisons and the federal prison system were attributed to the AB over a 23-year time span, with six of eight murders of Pelican Bay inmates in 1996 at the hands of the AB in prison (Duersten, 2005).

Generation Gap: Age of Offender

Young gang members, because of the impulsivity that characterizes their youth, are less inclined to follow the established “codes” of their elder, criminal mentors. They have more to prove – more “work to put in” – and are willing to be messy, willing to take criminal risks that might garner more attention (from rivals and law enforcement) for themselves and the gang. Street gangs tend to engage in more high profile behavior than prison gangs; seeing their gang’s name and reading about their exploits in the newspaper bolster their reputation. But for the prison gang, such publicity-for-publicity’s-sake is averse to its primary agenda: making money and controlling prison rackets (such as drug and tobacco sales, extortion, etc.), which can only be done with as little outside law enforcement or prison administration interference as possible. These different norms and codes of conduct are dependent upon the age of the gang member; youthful offenders are more than a handful, and they have not been raised with the same respect and reverence for the gang as older members have.

Within prison, veteran gang members call the shots, and the younger members, with the physical prowess common to the youthful and spry, do the deeds. The power of these *veteranos*, with their more calculated approach to crime and less impulsivity in action, has atrophied, at least in the eyes of the younger “Pepsi Generation” members (Hunt, Riegel, Morales & Waldorf, 1993) who only seem interested in what the gang can do for them. For the veterans, the gang was about the group and the brotherhood; for the youngsters, it is about the individual’s benefit from the group. The street gang mentality of younger

recruits and members versus that of the older inmates and traditional prison gang members is illustrated in the following comment by a Texas prison warden:

Very rarely do you see a 30-year-old recruited into a prison gang. Usually it's a guy who's 17, 18, 19 years old. By the time a guy turns 30, he's thinking, "I just want to get my three meals a day, do my time and make the best of it and get out. I don't want to be locked down." When I was at [another prison unit in Huntsville], the hardest thing about us controlling these kids [was] they don't care – "I'll eat a peanut butter sandwich for six months at a time." They didn't care. The youth is so resilient, but as they get older, and I see some of these guys when I walk out into the hallway now, and I had them at [another prison unit in Huntsville], and that's what they'll say, "Man, those were some wild times. I ain't never going to do that again." They've mellowed over time, they've gotten used to institutional life. What they look forward to is three meals, football games on TV, and going to bed at 10:30, quietly. They want to be able to get a good night's sleep, whereas the kids don't care about that. And even old gang members will tell you they're scared of the young inmates today because where they used to have a sense of pride, authority, they had rules and they said, "You're going to respect the administration because if we do something to them, The Man's going to climb down on us. We're going to respect the women because we don't want to be looked on as being a disrespectful group." But they said these young guys don't care about nothing. They say, "We can't control these [young] guys because they don't care about a consequence," whereas the old prison gangs would say, "What is the consequence if we do this?" The young guys say, "We don't care" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

An original Texas Syndicate member, now in his 60s and still incarcerated for two homicides, including the murder of an ex-member who turned government informant, reaffirmed the differences in age and conduct: "The class and character of the members they bring in now is nothing like it was" (Schiller, 2011, "First prison gang"). Even prison gangs have standards.

Although many of today's members approach prison gang life with the mentality of the street gang, both prison and street gang members need one another inside the walls. The younger gangsters look to the veterans for prison

survival skills, and the veterans need this younger cohort for their technological skills.⁶¹ Older gang members who have been incarcerated for decades have no experience with the Internet, cell phones (unless smuggled in, perhaps), or public social networking sites, except through conversation with family or friends who may maintain MySpace or Facebook pages for them. Older members, it has been suggested, may be more open to renouncing prison gang membership these days because they disagree with how the new generation of gang members is handling the gang's business. Older members accuse the younger ones of being too flamboyant in their actions, too eager to publicize the gang's exploits through graffiti, and too quick to talk, or "snitch," on fellow members.⁶² However, they still need the youngsters because the gang can only survive with bodies; it is the sheer number of members that contributes to its longevity and existence. Carlson (2001) concurs that this mentality of younger street gang members in prison who are "more violent, organized, and sophisticated" (p. 12) is a more recent change in prison gang composition, inevitably altering the dynamic of established prison gang members and their younger counterparts. (Today it is all about organized crime and money, which is a change from the gangs' historical narratives that they were all about the "family" and brotherhood.) Hunt et al., in their 1993 study on the changes in prison attributed to gang culture, also

⁶¹ One example of the increased use of technology to target rival gang members involved a "New Breed" gang member in Chicago, Illinois. Chicago police confirmed that this particular gang member visited the Illinois Department of Corrections Web site, "locate[d] mugshots of his gang's intended targets and print[ed] them out for hitmen so they would know for whom they're looking" (Sweeney & Donovan, 2006). For many older, incarcerated street and prison gang members, the birth of the Internet arrived years into their sentences, when such a concept was still the realm of science fiction.

⁶² A Corpus Christi, Texas, police detective noted that, compared to street gang members, prison gang members are "much more professional about the way they do [murders], they don't talk..." (Ward, 1998, "Special report: The growth of Texas prison gangs").

found that younger inmates acted with greater spontaneity and less respect for the historical and established prison code of conduct. Older gang members view the younger “Pepsi Generation” (Hunt et al., 1993) weaned on *gangsta* rap and video games as unabashedly impulsive and immature, and they are not pleased with the youngsters’ need for publicity as a mechanism for earning respect. This change in prison gang mentality, from old school to new school, was evident in a drive-by shooting in Victoria, Texas, in November 2003. Members of Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos (HPL), a Hispanic prison gang, conducted a drive-by shooting on the home of a known Raza Unida (RU) member.⁶³ In the cross-fire, the six-year-old son of the intended RU target was killed (Collins, 2004; Hathcock, 2004). In the past, prison gang members employing such street gang tactics (i.e., a drive-by shooting, which traditionally has been the purview of street gangs) was unheard of, but for the “Pepsi Generation,” having grown up in street gangs with the street gang mentality, such behavior has become a legitimate alternative.⁶⁴

⁶³ Raza Unida is another Texas-based Hispanic prison gang and identified Security Threat Group within TDCJ.

⁶⁴ In early April 2012, local, state and federal law enforcement officials arrested several Texas Mexican Mafia members in San Antonio as a result of an investigation beginning in 2009 that uncovered extortion and drug trafficking (primarily cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana), among other violent crimes (Contreras, 2012). The investigation reportedly “took an air of immediacy” (Contreras, 2012) after a 21-year-old Dallas college student was viciously attacked and stabbed by Texas Mexican Mafia members – in front of a crowd of onlookers – on the beach in South Padre Island during Spring Break. According to newspaper accounts, the suspects first beat the student with ice chests before stabbing him nine times, all because he “defended the honor of a woman on the beach” to whom the suspects “[said] something” before hitting her and the victim when he attempted to intervene (Contreras, 2012). Bystanders captured the assault on video and posted it on the Internet. (The first part of the attack was included in a news clip, available at http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local_news/article/Police-raid-gang-tied-to-S-Padre-stabbing-3460337.php, which aided law enforcement in identifying the suspects.)

With age and incarceration, however, come a belated wisdom and regret, as one Texas warden explains:

As they get older, especially the ones who joined when they were 16, 17, 18 years old, when they get into their 30s, they mellow out, they're much easier to deal with, and they'll even talk openly to you about regret. So I think that if there's an underlying cause [to joining a gang], it's adolescence. That's what continues to perpetuate it....He doesn't realize what he's done to himself until the judge gives him that 30-year sentence and he's like, "Oh shit." Because he's been going in and out of juvenile, going in and out of the county jail, and finally what we call "graduating to the big league," he might get a five-year sentence and do two years on it. But all of a sudden he might get that big sentence and be like, "Aw, shit, what have I done to myself?" And then you'll see a lot of these guys sit there and say, "I wish I could have done it different" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

But without the benefit of hindsight, many younger members succumb to the prison gang life, whether actively recruited or already predisposed to joining because of prior street gang affiliation, and are fully socialized upon incarceration into The Way of the STG.

Race and Ethnicity

Unlike in the street, where hybrid gangs may confound the issue,⁶⁵ prison gangs typically align based on race; however, this group formation is not a conveyor-belt process, with White inmates here, African-American there, and Hispanic way over there, nor is race the sole characteristic differentiating each gang. White (2003) stresses the "cultural and social factors of the communities

⁶⁵ "Modern-day hybrid gangs" may be characterized as the more-confused-and-less-committed-to-following-established-codes-of-conduct-and-rules-of-traditional-gangs gangs. Starbuck, Howell and Lindquist (2001) identified hybrid gangs in communities that had "no gang culture prior to the 1980s or 1990s" (p.1) and noted that membership is often ethnically and racially diverse, affiliations are fluid (i.e., members may associate with more than one gang), and individuals from rival gangs may form partnerships to commit crimes in other jurisdictions.

and/or racial/ethnic groups from which [the gangs] emerged” (p. 5-4) and their impact on the “structure and style of the gangs [in prison]” (p. 5-4). Noting these differences, White further states that California-based Hispanic gangs “reflect the importance of family allegiance within the Hispanic culture” (p. 5-4), while the African-American gangs, such as the Bloods and Crips, have “a much looser organizational structure and often are much less structured internally, reflecting the more individualistic attitudes of the California culture” (p. 5-4). This less organized and “more individualistic attitude” is also common to the Crips and Bloods in the Texas prison system:

They maintain their ethnicity because they're home-based groups [that] developed in the community. They are known well within themselves because they developed that strong nucleus, but once they came to the penitentiary, they were known only by the number [of total members of all sets]. We tried to engulf them all in one, but if you go out into the streets, there's [various Crip and Blood sets]. You see the rivals are there, but when they come to prison, it's “We're all Crips [or all Bloods]. We're all under the blue [or red]” (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).⁶⁶

In an Alice-in-Wonderland world, they become more individualistic by losing their individuality; that is, as the prison system categorizes individual Crip sets under the general “Crip” umbrella, these members become “one” gang (for administration and management purposes) instead of “many.”

Even in a controlled and rule-based environment like prison, prison gangs of different ethnicities may set aside the politics of race to establish peace treaties or even work together to reach a common goal, most notably profit. For example, the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas has been known to work with the

⁶⁶ Crips generally are associated with the color blue, and Bloods with the color red.

Texas Mexican Mafia to transport drugs and weapons in Texas (Hyde, 2008). Mexican drug cartels⁶⁷ will even entertain business propositions from “select OMG [Outlaw Motorcycle Gang] and White Supremacist groups, purely for financial gain” (NGIC, 2011, p. 25). Despite these occasional alliances, the daily-ness of prison life demands routine and structure, and, despite prison administrations’ best-intentioned desegregation policies, Renaud (2002) states that “dayroom seating [in Texas prisons] is rigidly enforced by inmates, and it is segregated along racial and geographical lines. Blacks from Dallas will sit on one bench, Chicanos from San Antonio on another” (p. 52). Refusal to adhere to this basic (and understood) tenet, even if unintentional, has repercussions: “If an inmate sits where he is not supposed to, he faces a beating from his homeboys for placing them under undue pressure by disrespecting the owners of that bench” (Renaud, 2002, p. 52). The law of the playground has indeed reached prison.

Alignment extends beyond the color of one’s skin and into geography and culture, but it is not simply White versus African-American versus Hispanic. Mexican nationals, for instance, have established their own protection and predatory groups, whether by choice or necessity (especially if already-established groups prohibit them from joining) to prove and maintain their ethnic differences. A Texas prison official describes the origins of one such group whose members are not typically permitted to join one of the other Hispanic prison gangs:

⁶⁷ The connection between Mexican-based drug cartels and prison gangs will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

Here comes a group that was basically a third country-type group. They come from Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Puerto Rico and Cuba, so it was these cultural misfits that were not able to hang with the historically Hispanic community, or with Mexican-Americans. They were looked at as “trashy” because they could not speak any English, and because they came from these other countries... (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

Prison gang members will even make allowances for directed interaction with individuals of other races or religions. For example, one Jewish inmate incarcerated in a western state prison acknowledged that a “compromise was brokered” by an Aryan-based prison gang to allow him to sit at tables used by other White inmates – he became their jailhouse lawyer. His safety was tentatively ensured by his only commodity, his intelligence. Racial and religious differences can be overlooked and irrationally justified if economic gain and skills in rhetoric can be “exploit[ed]” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009). Racist ideology can go into remission if these partnerships aim to be financially and mutually beneficial for all groups involved.

Yet though prison gangs (white, black, or Hispanic) will often use racist rhetoric as a unifier, close inspection of such groups reveals that it is often the desire for power, profit and control that really drives gangs to action. Some gangs purport to have a racial component when, in reality, criminal enterprise may be the true focus of the gangs’ attentions....The evidence that larceny often trumps racial purity can be seen when gangs of different racial makeups form “alliances” in order to strengthen their control of money-making ventures behind prison walls (Anti-Defamation League, 2002, p. 10).

Further illustrating this point, the Aryan Brotherhood in California allegedly aligned with El Rukns, an African-American gang from the Midwest, to expand their business, according to a federal indictment (Duersten, 2005). California Aryan Brotherhood members in federal prison also provided protection for

imprisoned La Cosa Nostra members (the Italian Mafia) and “took care of La Cosa Nostra ‘hits’ on the inside. In return, La Cosa Nostra provided money, drugs and assistance to Brotherhood members” (Anti-Defamation League, 2002, p. 15). Similarly, in 2007, New Jersey officials uncovered a partnership between the Luchese crime family (one of the organized crime “families” of the Italian Mafia operating in New York City) and a local Bloods street gang (Chen & Kocieniewski, 2007). This association seems improbable if one considers their differences in business plans and philosophies (i.e., the Italian Mafia, like prison gangs, prefer little publicity so they may continue to make money, while street gang members may be more boisterous and prone to ostentatious displays that inevitably attract the attention of law enforcement), but if the pairing has the potential to be mutually beneficial, then the gangs can and will work collaboratively.

Prison Gang Belief System: Perpendicular Moral Universe

“Taking a life, a person’s life, doesn’t mean nothing to me. Doesn’t mean nothing at all. I couldn’t care less for the family. I couldn’t care less for the person that died. You want to hurt one of us, we are going to hurt one of you guys. If [your] momma’s gonna cry, oh, well, it’s not my momma.”

—active Nuestra Familia (California prison gang) member in the documentary, “Nuestra Familia, Our Family” (quoted in Moore, 2005)

This next section will introduce key aspects of prison gangs that directly impact the ability and amenability of its members to be resocialized. Delving into the beliefs and orientation of prison gang members, this section will emphasize the fact that prison gang members are not doppelgängers for 13-year-olds with a can of spray paint and unsupervised free-time after school. It is necessary to understand what the prison system is presented with before it attempts to

resocialize prison gang members with the hope of transforming them into suitable candidates for reentry to the general population and, eventually, the free world.

Pinizzotto, Davis and Miller III (2006), in excerpts from identified street gang members in their study of assaults on law enforcement officers, note that gang members do not learn how to navigate the “parameters of socially acceptable behavior” (p. 2). They live in a fairly closed system surrounded by their chosen peers (often their connections may not extend beyond their immediate neighborhood) whose norms and values are similar to their own. Their perverted sense of appropriate behavior may be “encourage[d], or recognize[d] as adaptive for their survival on the street” (p. 2). For those who criminally progress to prison and, for a myriad of reasons, seek the protection of a prison gang, they might find that prison gang membership “alleviates some of the ‘pains of imprisonment’” (Wood & Adler, 2001, citing Sykes [1958], p. 173). Membership also offers solidarity and a familiarity that transcends the prison experience into something more manageable and acts as a “buffer against the institutional mass” (Wood & Adler, 2001, p. 173). Ultimately for the prison gang member, he finds himself living in a perpendicular moral universe whose values t-bone those of mainstream society. The following section will examine this varied belief system that governs the life and survival of a prison gang member.

Protection

“If you’re gonna do a lot of time in the pen, you can’t do it by yourself.”
–Nazi Low Rider prison gang member in California (National Institute of Corrections, 2000, “Correctional strategies in gang management”)

Prison gangs often originate as self-protection groups to ensure inmates’ safety during incarceration, but this form of protection places the individual at

even greater risk. A single 'enemy' multiplies into numerous rivals, including those of the member's newest comrades. According to one Texas prison warden with more than 25 years' experience in the system, "The purpose for having a gang or being in a gang develops because you do not feel safe and you need protection" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). The Texas Syndicate, for example, formed in the mid-1970s in California's Folsom State Prison by five Texas inmates referring to themselves as "Sindicato Tejano." These Mexican-American inmates gathered in the recreation yard with other Mexican nationals and would sing Mexican songs (Glauber, 1985). Cultural pride and camaraderie brought them together (P.F., personal communication, January 19, 2007), but once they were released back to Texas and subsequently incarcerated for new offenses and violations, they re-grouped in prison and, according to Fong (1990), formed as a self-protection group against the building tenders.

The decision to join a gang once in prison is involuntarily voluntary, as it is made with a distorted perception of safety and security. With only 6% of the Texas prison population confirmed as prison gang, or Security Threat Group, members, the system clearly is not overrun with them.⁶⁸ Prison offers an opportunity for an advanced degree for those resigned to the gangster lifestyle, and prison gangs present a viable option for protection for those unable or unwilling to serve their sentences as a "lone wolf among a pack of wolves" (Ling,

⁶⁸ The Texas Department of Criminal Justice recognizes only 12 groups as Security Threat Groups. Only those male offenders who have been confirmed or validated as Security Threat Group, or prison gang, members are represented in that 6% total. Excluded in those calculations are those offenders who are suspected Security Threat Group members and members of various street gangs or cliques.

2005, “Surviving maximum security”). But protection comes with a price, and the privileges of membership become even more problematic.

Respect

One should never underestimate the intensity of this need for respect, and to what extent an inmate will react if he or she feels disrespected....

—White, 2003, p. 5-5

Respect, often fear re-interpreted through the gangster’s eyes, is another characteristic gang members post on their criminal résumés. It is earned through intimidation and physical violence against “outsiders” (Pinizzotto et al., 2006, p. 7). However, garnering respect and status through physical violence is not the sole purview of a gang member, as this response is part of the “street code” landscape that extends to the prison system and convict code, which will be discussed in depth later in the chapter. “[F]or people to be afraid of us is respect,” according to one former high-ranking California Mexican Mafia member (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Ruling by fear”). That fear is not necessarily a result of a direct assault on an individual; rather, it parallels the concept of general deterrence. Tales of gangland murder are akin to the childhood game of “telephone” – the stories may be exaggerated and not quite as faithful to the original version by the time they reach the end of the line, but they will be remembered, and other members will likely “benefit from those murders” (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Ruling by fear”), regardless of their actual involvement.

Blood In, Blood Out

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he had only Ten Commandments. These folks have 22. Violate any one of them and you’re subject to death.”

–Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Wells, Jr., during the federal trial of three Texas Syndicate members in McAllen, Texas, in August 2010 (Taylor, 2011)

While street gang membership may be fluid, prison gangs pride themselves on their loyalty to the death. The governing principle of “blood in, blood out,” typically indicating that one must shed blood to join the gang, and kill or be killed to leave, epitomizes the difference between street and prison gangs. Certainly street gang members may have to “put in work,” or commit a crime, to join (just one of many initiation rites to grant membership and its privileges) – or be “jumped in”⁶⁹ and subsequently “jumped out” when, for any number of reasons, the street gang life loses its appeal and no longer makes sense to the individual – and death during such a ritual may be more accidental than intentional.⁷⁰ But for the prison gang prospect who accepts all that membership offers, he must abide by this oath. Gang constitutions outlining rules, roles, gang hierarchy, penalties for violations,⁷¹ and other tenets (including many standards

⁶⁹ Being “jumped in” (also referred to as “quoted in,” beaten in,” or “rolled in,” among other terms) is a common initiation ritual where a recruit must fight a specified number of gang members for a specified amount of time (time limit varies from gang to gang, but usually lasts between 15 seconds and one minute). The physical assault is intended to gauge the prospective member's toughness and willingness to endure pain for the gang.

⁷⁰ In July 2005, a U.S. Army sergeant stationed in Hohenneck, Germany, endured a six-minute “jump in” at the hands of nine individuals, including airmen, soldiers and one civilian, to become a member of the Gangster Disciples. After being beaten for those six minutes, the 25-year-old sergeant was “given a group hug and told he was in the gang” (Mraz, 2007, “Witness”). The sergeant, who had completed a tour of duty in Iraq, was found dead in his barracks hours later; an autopsy revealed “severe injuries to his brain and heart” (Mraz, 2007, “Expert testifies”). During the trial, the victim's mother testified that “[y]ou expect in wartime to get the call or perhaps the knock on your door....Never in a million years did I expect someone to say to me that your son was beaten to death by other soldiers” (Mraz, 2007, “Soldier gets 12 years”).

⁷¹ According to a self-admitted member of the Aryan Circle, a White supremacist prison gang, violations, including “disloyalty” among brothers, may be handled in the following manner: “Oh, we do the whole paperwork. It's called ‘SOS’ or ‘Smash on [Sight]’ [implies an assault or other physical harm]. That's where you've messed up so bad within the organization, we don't want you anymore. You're trash. You have messed up so bad that we will cut your patch [tattoo] off. Literally, we will burn it out of your skin” (Kastner, 2012, “Special investigation: Aryan Circle in the Basin, part 2”).

which are co-opted from the “convict code,” which enumerates the code of conduct through which inmates increase their odds of successfully navigating prison life, such as no homosexuality, no getting in other inmates’ business, no stealing from other inmates, and no snitching or tattling, among others. The convict code will be discussed later in this chapter.) are not subject to a buffet-style selection; one cannot choose to adhere to those that pique interest or would be most beneficial to an individual member. According to the Anti-Defamation League (2002),

Such constitutions are so widespread among prison gangs that they play a major role in the decisions of some state prison systems to classify groups as prison gangs. The constitutions are important because they help create a sense of legitimacy for the group, giving new members something with which to identify (p. 11).

The continuity of “blood in, blood out” – the circle of life for the non-Disney crowd – was explained during a murder trial of a California Aryan Brotherhood (AB)⁷² member who had been ordered to kill the victim, an associate who had been in conflict with the gang’s leadership.⁷³

[The offender] tried to kill [the victim] twice on the same day – first by giving him a “hotshot” (a lethal dose of heroin); then, when that didn’t work, eliciting the aid of another inmate to throttle [the victim] with a garrote knotted together from strips of bedsheet. [The victim’s cellmate] tried to intervene, but when [the offender] threatened him, [the cellmate] backed off – and was forced to stand by and listen as they strangled...[the victim] to death. “What [the cellmate] saw was more than just a prison murder, it was the evolution of a prison gang,” [the prosecutor] told the court.... “Because in effect, he saw the defendant entering the AB just as

⁷² It should be noted that the Aryan Brotherhood (AB) prison gang in California is a separate and distinct group from the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas (ABT) prison gang.

⁷³ The murder occurred *inside* the federal penitentiary in Lompoc, California.

another was leaving it. He saw exactly what [the AB's] slogan says: 'blood in, blood out'" (Duersten, 2005, pp. 4-5).

Despite the gravity of the oath and the severity of anticipated punishment for failing to adhere to it, formal prison gang renunciation processes, such as TDCJ's GRAD process, may prove "blood in, blood out" to no longer be the written-in-blood concept it once was.

"It's Not Personal, Just Business": The Prison Gang's Concept of Loyalty

"He was down with me and I was down with him. We were down with each other like four flat tires."

—Edwin Debrow, Jr., committed to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) for a murder committed at age twelve and then transferred to TDCJ for the remainder of his 27-year sentence, describing his friendship with a fellow TYC student and Crip gang member (Lyons, 2002)⁷⁴

White (2003), in his discussion of the structure of the California Mexican Mafia, a Hispanic prison gang,⁷⁵ intimates that the "blood in, blood out" oath can definitely instill fear and intense loyalty among members, but the

motivation was not driven by fear as much as an internalized sense of loyalty and the fear of being outcast both within and without the prison. Within the Mexican immigrant community, family loyalty is one of the strongest norms, and [the California Mexican Mafia] reflected this in emerging as a surrogate family within the walls, just as the barrio street gangs had provided structure for many youngsters... (p. 5-3).

In a prison gang, loyalty to the gang itself is usually first, and to the individual second. The gang represents a substitute family – the family bond is the embodiment of loyalty, but the love and family support are conditional. As long

⁷⁴ During the 82nd Texas Legislative Session, Governor Rick Perry signed Senate Bill 653, which abolished the Texas Youth Commission – the agency responsible for the operation of all juvenile institutions and parole services throughout the state – and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. Effective December 1, 2011, those agencies' duties and responsibilities were transferred to the newly-created Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

⁷⁵ The California Mexican Mafia began in the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, California, in 1956 (White, 2003). This prison gang and the Texas Mexican Mafia, or Mexicanemi, are separate and distinct gangs.

as one adheres to the rules and meets the group's internal obligations, all may be well. But newspapers are rife with stories of prison gang members killing their own for any slight. In the mid-1990s, the news program *60 Minutes* aired a segment on the California Mexican Mafia that showed undercover surveillance videotape of a hotel room meeting where gang business was discussed, including an agreement that one absent member in poor standing would be murdered (Hamlin, 1997). No emotion expended, no conscience wavered, just a perfunctory "we'll kill him," as if members were itemizing a grocery list or noting a third straight day of rain.

Recruitment

If the consequences and repercussions are so extreme for a variety of real and perceived slights, then how do prison gangs continually fill their ranks and top off their numbers? Despite the violence and brutality, recruitment of new prospects does not appear to be a hard sell, and the dynamics are similar across state lines. For example, the State of New York's Commission of Investigation, in its publication, "Combating Gang Activity in New York: Suppression, Intervention, Prevention" (2006), conceded that the state's "correctional institutions [act] as a breeding ground for gangs and...the...prison system is the primary place for gang recruitment" (pp. 26-27). Whether new offenders erroneously believe prisons are teeming with gangsters, and they have no choice but to join, or they are inmates with no family on the outside to offer emotional support or replenish an empty commissary fund, recruitment from county jails and prisons is a near certainty.

Fear of the Unknown and Too Much Popular Prison Media

One lure of prison gangs, as previously mentioned, is its promise of protection. For the neophyte prisoner who, perhaps, has been educated by too many cable documentaries on prison gangs and prison life, the thought of safely “doing his own time” without being physically tested is unimaginable. One Texas prison warden elaborated on how this fear of the unknown can be exploited for the gang’s benefit:

[The] recruitment's occurring there [at the county jail level] before they ever get [to TDCJ], because you've got a guy asking, “How many years did you get?” and another saying, “I got 30 years.” “Okay, that means you're going to have to do 15 flat, dude.” “Oh, man...” “Well, this is the way it's going to happen. I could turn you on to...” And especially if the guy's never been to prison before – “Oh, you know how it is.” It's hard to influence someone who's been in TDC[J] before because “you can't sell me, I've been there, I know what happens, I know how it goes.” But the guy that doesn't? *They're hearing all these horror stories about how bad Texas prisons are.* I don't think it's necessarily where they come from, but it's someone who's never been in the state penitentiary before [who is most susceptible]... (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The new inmate’s need to belong and feel safe may make him more vulnerable to recruitment, as he is not only the *seeker* but also the *sought after*.

The Impact of Race and Manipulative Recruitment

Although a new prisoner may intend to “do his own time,” his resolve to remain independent may be quickly challenged. According to a Texas warden, one tactic used to gauge susceptibility to recruitment is to set up new offenders not well-versed in the racial politics of prison:

The first thing you get when you go into a new facility, the first question is: “Are you an independent, or are you with somebody?” If you're an independent, that means you have to deal with multiple groups. That is, “I'm not associated with anybody. I'm going to do my own time.” That

means you'll be approached by this group, this group, this group, and all these different leaders of these groups, or con men, or whatever that will come out and try to extort me or recruit me. What ends up happening is for a White inmate, if a Black group approaches me and I tell them, "Hell no, I ain't doing nothing," then the White group comes up and tells me, "We can help you with this." And if I say, "I'm not gonna join," then they make a signal to [the Black group] and say, "He's not one of us" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The races can align temporarily if it is to call out a new inmate to subtly educate him on the order and expectations of prison life and to groom him for eventual recruitment.

Racial tension may indeed be high in prison, but members indirectly help one another out when it comes to recruitment. The different races may come together not only for financial gain, as explained earlier, but also as proof to new offenders that race is a force within prison. Recruitment and race are inextricably linked, if only because race is one of the most important defining characteristics of prison gangs. As one Aryan Brotherhood of Texas member serving two life sentences for a 2006 double murder stated, "I joined [the gang] for protection....Prison is a racist environment. And whether you like it or not, you'll be racist when you get out" (Hyde, 2008).

Youthful Offenders with Longer Sentences: The Perfect Storm for Maximizing Recruitment

Today certain types of offenders may be courted more readily than in the past, as the nature of recruitment has changed over time. Where prison gangs

used to recruit hard, pretty staunch guys[,] they're just taking bodies right now....Just because they have more members, don't make them more dangerous. They were more dangerous when one third of their membership had the potential to do something dangerous (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

One Texas prison official offered one possible explanation for the heightened recruitment within prison: younger offenders with longer sentences (P.F., personal communication, September 18, 2006). Shorter sentences are more conducive to remaining STG-free because a physically fit, youthful offender may believe he can handle incarceration on his own and answer any physical challenge; however, he may be more susceptible to the seduction of tangos, or hometown cliques, with their fluid membership and hometown allure.⁷⁶ On the other hand, those with shorter sentences do possess a certain appeal – an impending release or parole positions them to “extend the [gang’s] reach on the streets while the lifers [sit] in their cells and [mete] out singular forms of justice” (Duersten, 2005, p. 6). Offenders serving shorter sentences may be equally, if not more, attractive because, once ensnared, less time in prison equals more time in the community to conduct gang business (Danitz, 1998) and reap the financial rewards.

Once recruited, the generation gap between the older leaders and younger “pawns” becomes more apparent (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). A Texas warden recalled days past when one Hispanic prison gang embarked on a recruitment drive, targeting “all these real young rambunctious dudes” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). Unequipped with the restraint of their leadership, these younger members were intent on living the gang life as they believed it should be lived – “we’re supposed to be battling every day, we’re supposed to be locked down” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007) – but this mantra was contrary to

⁷⁶ “Tangos” will be discussed later in the chapter.

that of the older members who preferred “just hang[ing] on” and “fight[ing] our battles when we say” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). The outcome? No compromise, mediation or conflict resolution, but rather a “falling out” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007) with the younger members splintering off to handle their business their way.

Physical Design of the Facility

Finally, the ease with which prospects are recruited and the level of sustained activity are also dependent upon the physical design of the prison, as the layout of certain facilities is more conducive to recruitment than others. One higher-ranking prison gang officer with more than twenty years in the Texas prison system noted that the dorm-style buildings, which TDCJ erected quickly and cheaply to meet the growing demand for more space in the 1990s, made it “wide open...for recruiting [and] for meeting” (W.G., personal communication, January 19, 2007). Martin and Ekland-Olson (1987) even cited a 1944 report first presented to the then-Texas Prison Board that dormitories were behavioral nightmares and one of the “two major factors underlying disciplinary problems” (p. 16). The report, however, attributed these problems to overcrowding and the system’s habit of sending the worst of the worst to these “tanks,” where it was more difficult for security staff to monitor them (p. 17).

“Really, It’s Just Business”: Entrepreneurial Spirit with a Twist

With the ranks filled, prison gangs can focus on the endgame: making money and exerting control. They engage in extortion and the broader “illegal economy based on contraband goods and services” (Human Rights Watch,

2008, p. 5) in prison, where physical protection is just another commodity to be bought and sold. Renaud (2002) acknowledges that a “tobacco black market is so lucrative” (p. 120),⁷⁷ and prison gangs control the tobacco market on the units, just as they control the drug trade in the neighborhoods: “[No] one deals in prison without gang sponsorship, or at least approval. Stronger on some units but present on all, the gangs take a piece of each delivery and eventually take control of the mules – the inmate trustees and the guards” (p. 120). The “product/contraband/racket” vacuum prisons create is no different than the inmate power vacuum created after the demise of the building tender system. When certain items are prohibited on the unit, or certain classes of offenders are segregated or demoted from power, mere absence alone is sufficient to produce a replacement. To illustrate this point, one prison warden conceded that TDCJ inadvertently “created the black market when we got rid of tobacco,” and this now “drives” other gangs to “control all the tobacco trade on the unit” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

The effects of the tobacco black market are similar in other state prisons. When Pelican Bay State Prison in northern California banned the product in 2005, the prison’s “underground economy” became more robust, as tobacco “[became] a hotter commodity than narcotics” (Grube, 2007), which continue to be trafficked throughout the system. This “economy” extends beyond the prison to the community, as many prison gangs control the illicit drug sales in

⁷⁷ Tobacco and toilet paper are in no way equal commodities on the black market, but *The Hutchinson News* in Hutchinson, Kansas, reported the rationing of toilet paper to inmates in the Hutchinson Correctional Facility to an infrequently imposed rule of one roll per month to save money. The prison’s public information officer summed up the future of toilet paper in the facility: “Anything you restrict becomes a thing of value....It automatically becomes a means of dealing and trading” (Probst, 2007).

neighborhoods and, in turn, require street gangs to pay a “tax” to the prison gang for allowing them to operate and sell drugs on those street corners.⁷⁸ This dirty money may then be deposited into inmate trust fund accounts for their personal use, which may include sending money back to their families in the free world (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: The rise of an organization”).⁷⁹

Although prison gangs may form for protection against other inmate groups or for cultural pride, they ultimately sustain themselves by transforming into business or criminal enterprises.⁸⁰ When they identify a market to corner (such as drugs, tobacco, extortion, etc.), they respond to that business opportunity and move beyond needing the gang for protection to becoming predatory. For instance, the Texas Mafia, a White prison gang, “specifically developed to be an organized enterprise. If you wanted to do a robbery, they said, ‘If you come to us, we’ll provide you with this, this and this, but you have to give us so much of the proceeds as payoff’” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). The Texas Mexican Mafia, one of the largest Texas Hispanic prison gangs, explicitly states in its constitution that it is a “criminal organization and therefore will participate in all aspects of criminal interest for monetary benefits” (Fong, 1990). Cultural pride has been forfeited for making money and

⁷⁸ See J. Wright, 2010, “Homegrown Cartel,” for a summary of the tactics used by the Texas Mexican Mafia in San Antonio, Texas, for collecting “the dime,” or tax, and permitting local dealers to sell narcotics in the city.

⁷⁹ A former high-ranking California Mexican Mafia member explained how the money from the taxation of street-level drug sales, often in checks or money orders, would then be deposited into his inmate trust fund account. He claimed it was also his “right” to use those funds to buy treasury bonds, invest them in legitimate bank accounts, etc. The bottom line: “[W]e launder money all day long with the assistance of the California Department of Corrections” (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: The rise of an organization”).

⁸⁰ A self-admitted Aryan Circle member, who was identified as a “former felon,” explained to an Odessa, Texas, news reporter that he was “not a violent gang member. ‘I’m a leader of a successful organization’” (Kastner, 2012, “Special report: Aryan Circle in the Basin, part 1”).

controlling prison rackets. Gangs remain an economic venture based on geography; whether those dollars are earned on a street corner or in confinement is irrelevant. The fact that they *are* earned is at the crux of prison gang life.

As previously mentioned, street gang members are typically younger, more impulsive and less organizationally-sophisticated than prison gang members, and, for them, the gang may serve a greater social function (such as substitute family and support system) than an economic one (Nafekh & Stys, 2004, citing Kenney & Finckenauer, 1995, pp. 43-44). Despite these differences, both street and prison gang members have entrepreneurial aspirations. In 2007, New Jersey officials stumbled across an “alarming alliance” between the Luchese crime family and the Nine Trey Gangster Bloods, a local street gang, that provided more than anecdotal evidence, instilling fear that “connect[ed] old-school organized crime, the [Italian] Mafia, with new-school organized crime, gangs” (Chen & Kocieniewski, 2007). With the assistance of a prison guard at the East Jersey State Prison, a high-ranking Blood member aligned with two Luchese members to smuggle drugs and cellphones into the facility. This brief marriage of publicity-seeking street gang and the more business-oriented Italian Mafia illustrates the differences between the two types of gang mentality, but also highlights the “admiration” (Chen & Kocieniewski, 2007) the street gang members have for the type of criminal organization that has been depicted for decades on celluloid. A former gang unit supervisor in the United States Attorney’s Office in New Jersey summed up these differences in perspective:

No self-respecting mobster would want anything to do with the Bloods or Crips because those gangs are the antithesis of the Mafia....The mob is concerned with making money over the long haul, trying to appear

respectable. But the Bloods are concerned with projecting their status, so they're all, "I'm going to shoot up the block and wear a red bandanna." [...] The Blood guys love mobsters because they're the old-school gangsters....A lot of my Mafia informants in prison would complain that they couldn't get away from the Bloods' always following them and fawning over them (Chen & Kocieniewski, 2007).

The street gang member assumes the role of the younger, annoying sibling who longs to emulate his older brothers and will do whatever is necessary to be accepted. The more traditional organized crime families will use them if the outcomes will be mutually beneficial. Although the above example depicts the awe-inspiring relationship between incarcerated street gang members and the Italian Mafia, parallels exist with prison gangs, as they, like the Italian crime families, are invested in economic prosperity with minimal interference and show. Similarly, younger street gang members may hold prison gangsters in high esteem, especially if gang life has become a multigenerational phenomenon. If prison has "the grandfather, the father, and the son in here," that leaves "Little Joey...waiting in [a juvenile institution] to get of age so he can come to the state penitentiary" (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007). For some, incarceration and a chance to become a prison gang member are the pinnacles of a criminal career.

Connections to Mexican Drug Cartels: Opportunity for Even Greater Financial Gain

The "Attorney General's Report to Congress on the Growth of Violent Street Gangs in Suburban Areas," published in April 2008, solidified the connection between Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and gangs.⁸¹

⁸¹ Recently the term "drug trafficking organization" has been selectively replaced with the now-preferred "transnational organized crime" (TOC) or "transnational criminal organization" (TCO) to reflect the expansion of criminal activity beyond the manufacture and distribution of illicit drugs.

The Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos prison gang, for example, has established a working relationship with associates and/or members of the Gulf Cartel, and the Texas Mexican Mafia receives narcotics for distribution from the Gulf Cartel and/or Juárez Cartel members or associates (U.S. Department of Justice, “Attorney General’s report,” 2008).⁸² Similarly, Mexican drug cartels employ Texas Syndicate members as “subcontractors” (Schiller, 2011, “First prison gang”) to move narcotics from Texas throughout the United States. The *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment* exposed the alliances between various Mexican DTOs and prison and street gangs, with Texas prison gangs well represented (NGIC, 2011, pp. 84-85).⁸³ According to the *National Drug Threat*

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime adopted the following definition for such organized crime: a “structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences [sic] established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004, p. 5). In July 2011, President Barack Obama released the White House’s “Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime,” based on a “comprehensive intelligence assessment of international crime” completed in December 2010 (The White House, 2011, “Remarks at White House release of strategy”). Mexican-based Los Zetas was one of four TCOs targeted for sanctions implemented by the U.S. Treasury Department for its “wide variety of serious criminal revenue-generating activity” (The White House, 2011, “Remarks”) that poses “threats to national security” (The White House, 2011, “Strategy to combat transnational organized crime,” p. 17). (The other three TCOs include the Brothers’ Circle, based in countries comprising the former Soviet Union; the Camorra in Italy; and the Yakuza in Japan [The White House, 2011, “Remarks”].) Los Zetas, like its fellow Mexican DTOs, has ventured into other profitable and illegal activities, including human trafficking and smuggling, kidnapping, extortion (Johnson, 2011; Valdez, 2011), pirated movies and music (Longmire, 2011), and theft of crude oil (Corcoran, 2012; Valdez, 2011).

⁸² For a complete list of the suspected connections among street, prison and outlaw motorcycle gangs, and Mexican DTOs, see the chart in the aforementioned report to Congress, available at <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs27/27612/appendc.htm#start>

⁸³ According to the assessment, the Sinaloa Cartel has aligned with Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos (HPL) and the West Texas Tango; Los Zetas with Barrio Azteca, HPL, Texas Mexican Mafia, and Texas Syndicate; the Gulf Cartel with HPL, Partido Revolucionario Mexicano, Raza Unida and Texas Chicano Brotherhood; and the Juárez Cartel with HPL and Barrio Azteca. For a complete list of additional allies and rivals beyond Texas, see Appendix B, pages 84-85, in the aforementioned report.

Assessment 2011 released by the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC),⁸⁴ Mexican DTOs “were operating in more than a thousand U.S. cities during 2009 and 2010” (p.8), adding that, in 2010, “[a]t least 15 U.S. gangs reportedly collaborated” (p. 11) with the drug cartels to “traffic wholesale quantities of cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin in the United States” (p. 11).⁸⁵ McCaffrey and Scales (2011), in their controversial strategic assessment of the security of the Texas border,⁸⁶ reported that the “number of Texas prison gangs [working] directly with the Mexican cartels...increased from four to 12” (p. 19) in 2011, adding that the Texas Mexican Mafia and Texas Syndicate have been utilized as cartel “subcontractors” (p. 20) to “enforce narco-trafficking and to transport drugs on U.S. soil” (p. 20). Evidence of the Texas Syndicate’s partnership with the Gulf Cartel culminated in the arrest of eleven Syndicate members in the Austin, Texas, area in February 2011. Members allegedly “brought thousands of pounds of marijuana, methamphetamine and cocaine across the border” to then be “staged for distribution” throughout Texas and beyond (Vail, 2011).

On any given day, local newspapers throughout Texas constantly remind readers of the connection between street and prison gangs and Mexican DTOs.

⁸⁴ The assessment, which gauges the “threat posed to the United States by the trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs” (p. 55), is based on information from almost 3,000 state and local law enforcement agencies that responded to NDIC’s threat assessment survey.

⁸⁵ In 2011, Tony Coulson, retired head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Tucson, Arizona, “questioned [NDIC’s] reports” (Steller, 2011) that claimed American cities were being overrun with a “Mexican drug cartel presence” (Steller, 2011). He countered that “[a]nother way to describe those people would be as cartel customers” (Steller, 2011), not full-fledged members responsible for cartel operations and decisions.

⁸⁶ This report was commissioned by the Texas Department of Agriculture and the Texas Department of Public Safety to address the increasing threat by Mexican DTOs along the Texas-Mexico border.

A spokesman for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in Houston stated the obvious: “There is no doubt about it; local gangs in Houston are connected to cartels in Mexico. They are in position; they have the influence and the connections” (Schiller, 2010). These connections, however, are not restricted to Houston or other major metropolitan cities in Texas. For example:

- A 22-year-old San Antonio native and Laredo resident pleaded guilty in August 2008 to a federal charge of “conspiracy to kill and kidnap in a foreign country” for the murders of 19- and 14-year-old victims who had been kidnapped from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and then “tortured, gutted and...burned in 55-gallon drums” (Carroll, 2009). The 22-year-old hired assassin, or “sicario,” was part of an “American-born hitman crew” employed by the Gulf Cartel to follow drug shipments as they made their way to Texas cities and then collect the cash (Carroll, 2009).
- Another 17-year-old Houston, Texas, native (Carroll, 2009) is serving a 40-year sentence in TDCJ for murder, having been implicated in at least 30 other homicides (McLemore, 2007). He had been recruited only four years earlier as a hitman for Los Zetas, the former hired guns and enforcers for Mexico’s Gulf Cartel.⁸⁷ For a weekly wage of \$500, he murdered enemies in both

⁸⁷ Los Zetas are deserters from Mexico’s Grupo Aeromovil de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFE), or Special Air Mobile Forces. Originally acting as the enforcers for the Gulf Cartel, they were founded in the late 1990s and eventually split from the cartel in 2010. They continue in a violent struggle with other Mexican drug cartels for control of narcotics trafficking, human smuggling and other organized criminal activity along the Texas-Mexico border. Los Zetas have been described this way: “It is as if the Navy SEALs or an FBI SWAT team went to work for the Russian mob” (Lawson, 2008, p. 76). See STRATFOR’s 2009 publication, *Mexican Drug Cartels: Two Wars and a Look Southward*, and “The Falcon Lake Murder and Mexico’s Drug Wars” (Stewart, 2010)

Mexico and Laredo, Texas (El Universal, 2008, “El nino sicario;” McLemore, 2007).⁸⁸

- In Laredo, Texas, in 2009, a Texas Syndicate prospect who had hopes of joining the prison gang was sentenced to nine years in prison for an “attempted contract kidnapping for the Zetas” in 2006 (Buch, 2009). At the time of the offense, the Zetas were acting as the enforcement arm for the Gulf Cartel and “contracted” the Texas Syndicate to kidnap and execute a member of the Sinaloa Cartel, a rival of the Gulf Cartel (Buch, 2009). Another Texas Syndicate member confessed to actually shooting the victim and was sentenced to 20 years for that and for an additional cartel-related murder.
- From November 2008 to April 2009 in El Paso, Texas, several members of Barrio Azteca (BA), a Hispanic prison gang based in El Paso with a faction operating in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico,⁸⁹ were

for background information on and activity attributed to Los Zetas, and Samuel Logan’s more recent profile on the organization and the impact of a potential split among the cartel’s leaders (2012). (On October 7, 2012, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, Los Zetas leader, reportedly was killed by Mexican marines in a gun battle near a baseball field in Progreso, Coahuila. A fingerprint match and the release of “two alleged photographs of [his] face and body” [Pachico, 2012] confirmed his identity – prior to the kidnapping of his corpse from the funeral home by armed gunmen in a “hijacked hearse” [Gomez Licon, 2012]). For information on more recent developments of the major Mexican drug cartels, including Los Zetas, see STRATFOR’s annual assessment (2012), “Polarization and Sustained Violence in Mexico’s Cartel War.”

⁸⁸ Keith Boag with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) conducted a prison interview in 2012 with the now-22-year-old at the Gib Lewis Unit in Woodville, Texas. The report includes a brief clip of the 2006 interrogation with the Laredo Police Department after he was taken into custody. About his experience as a murderer, the then-suspect explained to the detective: “I liked what I was doing. After I killed the first person, [I continued] because I was good at it” (Boag, 2012). According to TDCJ’s public offender search, his expected release date is July 28, 2046.

⁸⁹ El Paso, Texas, was touted in November 2010 as the “safest large city in the United States,” according to city crime rankings by the CQ Press (Borunda, 2010, “El Paso named”). However, Ciudad Juárez, El Paso’s sister city that lies just across the Rio Grande River in Mexico, had

tried under the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.⁹⁰ The trial “solidified what some analysts have argued for years: connections exist between the Barrio Azteca...and top-level members of the Juárez Cartel drug trafficking organization” (Logan, 2009).⁹¹ Ten BA members were arrested in Ciudad Juárez in November 2008 in connection with the murders of at least 12 people (Logan, 2009). The conclusion?

The trial revealed how the Barrio Azteca has integrated with Mexican organized crime, but, more importantly, it demonstrated how Mexican organized crime relies on gangs inside the U.S. for distribution and support (Logan, 2009).

- On March 13, 2010, three individuals in two separate vehicles – a U.S. Consulate employee; her husband, a detention officer in the El Paso County (Texas) Jail; and the Mexican husband of another consulate employee – were gunned down after leaving a children’s

earned the dubious honor of being labeled “the world’s deadliest city” (Hill, 2010) and “the most dangerous city in the world” (Borunda, 2010, “Special report”) during the same year. But, according to a report released in January 2012 by Mexico’s Civic Council on Public Security and Criminal Justice, Juárez – which held this “most dangerous” title for the past three years – found itself placing second (148 homicides per 100,000 residents) to San Pedro Sula, Honduras (159 homicides per 100,000 residents) (Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y Justicia Penal A.C., 2012; Miroff, 2012; Ramsey, 2012). For the 2011 rankings of the top 50 most violent cities in the world, see pages 5-6 in the Civic Council’s (Consejo Ciudadano) report, “San Pedro Sula (Honduras) la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Juárez, la segunda.”

⁹⁰ According to the Texas Department of Public Safety’s *Texas Gang Threat Assessment 2011*, Barrio Azteca “has the strongest and most entrenched relationship with a Mexican cartel” (p. 22) out of the 22 street, prison and outlaw motorcycle gangs ranked in the assessment. (Pursuant to Section 421.082(e), Texas Government Code, the Texas Fusion Center prepares this annual report, first compiled in 2010, to “[assess] the threat posed statewide by criminal street gangs” and submits it to the Governor and Texas Legislature.)

⁹¹ An unsealed indictment in March 2011 explicitly stated that Barrio Azteca had “formed an alliance” with the Mexico-based Vicente Carrillo-Fuentes DTO, also known as the Juárez Cartel (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011, “35 members and associates of Barrio Azteca gang charged”).

birthday party in Juárez (Kavanagh, 2010).⁹² A few months later, a member of Los Aztecas, the Juárez faction of Barrio Azteca, “confessed that he ordered the murder of [the female U.S. Consulate employee] at the command of La Linea, the enforcement arm of the Juárez drug cartel” (Lacey & Malkin, 2010). However, in November 2010, the leader of Los Aztecas was arrested and laid claim to “ordering” not only the consulate murders, but also “80 percent of the killings” in Juárez in the previous 15 months (Malkin, 2010).⁹³ A year after the murders, in March 2011, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Texas issued an indictment for 35 Barrio Azteca members and associates, including 10 members for their role in the consulate killings, for various gang-related crimes, including money laundering, drug trafficking,

⁹² The consulate employee, who was four months pregnant, and her husband were heading back to their home in El Paso in their white SUV when they were followed by a Suburban that eventually “slam[med] into the driver’s-side hood,” its occupants opening fire (Buggs, 2010); the victims’ seven-month-old daughter was found unharmed in the back seat of their vehicle (“Arthur H. Redelfs,” 2010; Kavanagh, 2010). The other male victim, also driving a white SUV, and his two young children were making their way to their home in Juárez when they were pursued by another vehicle (Buggs, 2010). In the barrage of gunfire, their father was killed and both children wounded (“Arthur H. Redelfs,” 2010; Kavanagh, 2010).

⁹³ Although a discrepancy exists regarding true responsibility for the ordered hit on the female consulate employee and her husband, Mexican officials later said this Aztecas leader ordered the killing of the wife of the other Azteca member who originally confessed. The rationale? “[A]pparently...[the leader] felt [the other member] had given the authorities too much information about Los Aztecas” (Malkin, 2010). In April 2012, another leader of La Linea was sentenced to life in federal prison – specifically seven concurrent and three consecutive life terms, and an additional 20-year term – after pleading guilty to 11 charges, including involvement in not only the U.S. Consulate murders but also more than 1,500 other murders in the past four years (Borunda, 2012; CNN, 2012).

extortion, kidnapping and murder (U.S. Department of Justice, 2011, “35 members and associates”).⁹⁴

- In 2011, the Gulf Cartel “contracted” members of Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM), a Texas prison gang comprised of Mexican nationals and based in the Rio Grande Valley, to help locate a substantial amount of marijuana that “went missing” in Hidalgo County. The PRM members “purchased” drugs from dealers they believed had originally stolen the cartel’s bounty and then “kidnapped...and ordered [them] to reveal” the location of the stolen marijuana. Before the cartel could reclaim its product, the gang members were stopped by sheriff’s deputies, and a “shootout ensued,” leaving one deputy injured and a gang member dead (Buch, 2012).

The *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment* captures these partnerships by reporting that Mexican drug cartels “contract with street and prison gangs along the Southwest border to enforce and secure smuggling operations in Mexico and the United States, particularly in California and Texas border communities” (NGIC, 2011, p. 26).⁹⁵ Again, it is strictly business and a strict business.

⁹⁴ At a press conference, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas acknowledged that “[t]here is no evidence from the indictment it [i.e., the consulate murders] was anything but a mistake....The victims that were killed were not specifically targeted by anything they had done” (Borunda, 2011).

⁹⁵ The assessment further addresses the additional benefits of utilizing U.S.-based street and prison gang members in the narcotics trade: They are familiar with the lay of the land and “can generally cross the U.S.-Mexico border with less law enforcement scrutiny[,] and are therefore less likely to have illicit drug loads interdicted” (NGIC, 2011, p. 26).

Prison Gangs as Bureaucracies

Although prison gangs have “hierarchical structures based on power and ranks,⁹⁶ and are organized to survive leadership changes” (National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, 2005, p. 6), with a structure intended to “[insulate] gang leaders from direct involvement in criminal activity and, ultimately, prosecution” (National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, 2005, p. 6), higher- and lower-ranking members alike are not shielded from the internal strife inherent in any big business bent on financial gain. When a leader is arrested, or an agency “cuts off the head of the snake,” in-fighting often results as members jockey for leadership positions. As one Texas prison gang official explains:

If you break them up, you're making a bureaucracy of them and it's not going to be as effective. So if they say, “I want this guy hit [i.e., assaulted or killed],” they're going to have to go through 15 other guys for permission to say, “Yeah.” By that time, we'd have caught them and stopped it (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

Prison gangs have become bureaucracies mired in red tape – with “so many chiefs and not enough Indians” (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007) – replete with inner turmoil and an abundance of rules and regulations, and rank structures that, depending on the particular gang, are subject to an almost-daily changing of the guard. Bureaucratic disorganization may do them in when even law enforcement or correctional staff cannot. The need to “be

⁹⁶ Prison gangs are often structured along paramilitary lines, with, in some cases, a president, vice-president, captains, lieutenants, etc. Barbara Schwartz (2003) comments on the parallels between the prison and the military, noting that some correctional officers “come from the military” (p. P1-2). Even the “ambiance” of a correctional facility, according to Schwartz, is “often military” (p. P1-2). However, other prison gangs may adopt a “regional cell model” (Texas Department of Public Safety, 2011, p. 19) where different groups within the same gang operate “independent[ly] of one another at an operational level” (p. 19), with each group unaware of the other’s existence.

somebody” in prison and in the gang contributes to the gang’s mild self-implosion. Multiple leaders longing to retain their positions in the gang’s hierarchy inevitably fulfill the “convict code” prophecy that hierarchy and individual physical strength rule in prison. The strong prey on the weak, even among “brothers.” Everyone wants to lead, and fewer want to follow. Prison administration, however, can use this to its advantage, as prison gang members may become disheartened by the direction the gang is taking and use these internal power struggles as justification to disassociate from the group. Disassociation and renunciation, even if coated as disillusionment and not a sudden revelation to be a law-abiding individual, is still welcome if the end result – leaving the gang and the violence – is the same.

Tangos: The Next Generation Is Already Here (or “What If Prison Gangs and Street Gangs Had a Baby”)

Bureaucracy and changes in the nature of prison gangs may make tangos, or hometown cliques, more appealing to newer inmates. In the past, all intakes of new inmates sentenced to TDCJ were conducted in Huntsville. However, with TDCJ’s rapid expansion in the 1990s, additional intake facilities were built throughout the state.⁹⁷ A number of offenders from the same regions in Texas ended up in the same intake facilities near their hometowns; TDCJ’s size unwittingly assembled groups of inmates from various geographic locations in each facility. For example, new inmates from Dallas ended up at one intake

⁹⁷ New offenders are “received either at a transfer facility, a reception diagnostic facility, a state jail intake facility or a [Substance Abuse Felony Punishment] intake facility” (TDCJ, 2004, “Offender orientation handbook,” p. 1), all of which are positioned throughout the state and not solely in Huntsville.

facility near their hometown and soon realized individual safety and protection were their immediate priorities. The “formation” of these tangos has been attributed to “overcrowding” in TDCJ (Brendel, 2007), as the early 1990s witnessed their birth (Vogel, 2007). By 1995, these “homeboy groups” were already wreaking havoc in prison yards (Renaud, 1998). They would gather together to protect one another, and eventually their sheer numbers overwhelmed those of the agency-identified prison gang members. But the prison system is not the only culprit; their origins can also be traced back to the county jails. One STG official with TDCJ explained that “offenders on their way to prison would stay six months to a year or more in county jails, where security threat groups didn’t have a strong presence. Prisoners would carry with them relationships formed in county jails to the prison system” (Brendel, 2007). The issue of gang recruitment within the county jails, where temporary detention takes precedence over the prison system’s long-range goals, remains a topic for further research.

Tangos,⁹⁸ like the “famas”⁹⁹ before them, are social creations, not fixed in time, fluid in nature, and responsive to their environment. Straddling the line between street gang and prison gang, these bands of brothers, primarily Hispanic, typically align in and recruit from the county jails based on hometown,

⁹⁸ The four original tangos were based in Houston (Houstone), Austin (La Capirucha), Dallas (D-Town) and Fort Worth (Foros or Foritos). These four groups also refer to themselves as “The Four Horsemen.” The terms “Tango Blast” and “Puro Tango Blast” have also been used interchangeably to refer to these groups uniting to increase their numbers against, for example, a common rival. Additional tangos represent other cities and areas, including Corpus Christi, El Paso, San Antonio, the Rio Grande Valley, and West Texas (Brendel, 2007; Vogel, 2007).

⁹⁹ Typical Hispanic prison gangs, such as the Texas Syndicate or Mexican Mafia, may be referred to as “famas” or “familias.”

yet they may maintain their connection to their respective street gangs. Membership is usually voluntary with no “blood in, blood out” oath, and once back out on the street, no commitment needed. One member from Houston characterized it as “Gang-Lite”: It is “just homeboys looking after homeboys, protecting each other, and once you leave prison, it’s not supposed to really exist, even though it does” (Vogel, 2007).¹⁰⁰ They tend to have large numbers, so they will take on the suspected members of the established prison gangs who remain in general population. Large numbers, however, can lead to disorganization, a trait that can be both beneficial and detrimental – beneficial to the groups because without an organized structure and leadership, they do not fit TDCJ’s definition of a Security Threat Group; and detrimental to prison administration because this caveat prevents tango members from collectively being placed in administrative segregation under agency policy. Within TDCJ, tangos offer the benefit of membership and protection without the consequence of STG policy.

But was the evolution of tangos inevitable? Like the power vacuum that existed after the building tender system was dismantled in the 1980s, did TDCJ create yet another void to be filled with the removal of identified STG members from the general population? One warden believes otherwise, instead asserting that tango members weighed their options once on the prison units:

¹⁰⁰ Although tangos may not be classified within TDCJ as a Security Threat Group, their activities are no less violent, even on the outside. For example, several alleged West Texas Tango members were arrested in 2008 in Abilene, Texas, for crimes ranging from drive-by shootings to operating a major cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking organization (Schoenewald, 2008). In its annual gang threat assessment submitted to the Texas Legislature, the Texas Department of Public Safety ranked the Tango Blast cliques as one of the top four “greatest gang threats to Texas” (2011, p. 9).

When you talk to a lot of tango members, they said they formed because...“We don't want to join a prison gang because they say it's ‘blood in, blood out.’ We see what they do. You get this old geezer telling me, who's doing a five-year sentence, that I got to go do this, and I get more time added to my sentence?” And they didn't see that soldier life being real good for them. But what we noticed was two Mexican Mafia guys walk in that [tangos] knew were Mexican Mafia, and that we suspected [were Mexican Mafia], and they'd walk up to [the tango members] and say, “This is how this is going to run. You're going to pay this and you're going to pay that. If you're running tobacco, we get a cut of it....” And a couple of [the tango members] said, “We got these two dudes telling us 30 what to do,” so a couple of [the tango members] decided to go up and attack [the Mexican Mafia members] and make them catch out [i.e., be identified as STG members by TDCJ officials and then placed in segregation]. [The tango members] learned strength in numbers versus not just who you were (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Knowing exactly what line not to cross to be classified as a Security Threat Group and therefore segregated, tango members are quite adept at “outing” other suspected prison gang members in general population who, in turn, may admit their STG affiliation to correctional staff. Thus, those newly-minted STG members are placed in segregation for their own protection (Vogel, 2007), and the tango members remain in general population to exert their control over the unit for another day. As one member from Port Arthur stated, “[T]he thing that makes us closest to a gang is the fact we fight other gangs. But it doesn't matter which prison you go to, we outnumber everybody, and I think everyone is getting alarmed” (Vogel, 2007). It remains to be seen how prison administration will react to this emerging trend as they continue to grapple with the reality before them.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Tangos are not solely a Texas phenomenon. The New Mexico Department of Corrections has reported the emergence of Los Burqueños, a prison gang comprised of Albuquerque street gang members who “band together behind bars” for protection (Westervelt, 2012). Like Texas-based tangos that incorporate city skylines, among other city-specific images, into their tattoos,

GENERAL PRISON GANG MANAGEMENT POLICY AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES TO SECURITY THREAT GROUPS

Having presented several key characteristics of prison gangs, the discussion now turns to the ways in which correctional management has responded to these groups and their criminal activity behind bars. If a prison system like TDCJ intends to successfully transition prison gang members from a life in physical isolation to the general population, its administrative response to the increased violence after the building tender system was dismantled in the 1980s first must be examined. With the benefit of hindsight, the following sections will address these consequences of prison policy in depth.

Definition of a Security Threat Group

A Security Threat Group (STG), or prison gang, is generally defined as “an organization which operates within the prison system as a self-perpetuating criminally oriented entity,” according to Lyman (as cited in Fleisher and Decker, 2001, “An overview of the challenge,” p. 2).¹⁰² The National Gang Intelligence Center, in its *2011 National Gang Threat Assessment*, describes a prison gang as a “self-perpetuating criminal entit[y]” that “originated...and operate[s] within” the correctional setting, but recognizes the reality that they may also “operat[e] on the street” (p. 5). As mentioned earlier, they may be hierarchically structured, often along paramilitary lines, and members subscribe to a set of rules outlined in

this New Mexico version has adopted the Albuquerque skyline and University of New Mexico logo to represent its affiliation with the gang (Westervelt, 2012).

¹⁰² The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), for example, defines a prison gang as “any gang which originated and has its roots within the CDCR or any other custodial system” (CDCR, 2005, “Operations manual: Article 22: Gang management, Section 52070.16.1, Prison gangs defined,” p. 381).

an adopted constitution.¹⁰³ The Texas Department of Criminal Justice broadens this definition to include “[a]ny group of offenders TDCJ reasonably believes poses a threat to the physical safety of other offenders and staff due to the very nature of said Security Threat Group” (TDCJ, 2007, “Security threat groups: On the inside,” p. 2). The *organization* of the group and its ability to direct and engage in criminal activity are key to being classified as an STG. Offenders must work in concert to further the gang’s goals and activities, and, according to TDCJ’s Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO), an STG is ““far more organized [than a street gang] and has laws and regulations”” (Vogel, 2007). The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) operates under a similar assumption that STGs are “groups, gangs, or inmate organizations that have been observed acting in concert to promote violence, escape, and drug or terrorist activity” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008, “Attorney General’s report to Congress”), and are, therefore, deserving of the STG label.¹⁰⁴ The National Major Gang Task Force, a non-profit organization that promotes information sharing, networking, interagency collaboration and training among criminal justice agencies, has proposed a “best practice” recommendation for a standardized definition of an STG: “A group or association who may have

¹⁰³ For examples of Texas Syndicate and Texas Mexican Mafia constitutions, see Fong, R. (1990). The organizational structure of prison gangs: A Texas case study. *Federal Probation*, 54(1), 36-43.

¹⁰⁴ It may be a matter of semantics, but the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) uses the “disruptive groups” label to identify what other correctional agencies, including TDCJ, characterize as “Security Threat Groups,” and classifies offenders as associates, suspects or members. The BOP labels other gangs, including street gangs and other prison gangs in state facilities, as “Security Threat Groups” (Orlando-Morningstar, 1997) and does not segregate its gang members in individual facilities as a matter of policy, as TDCJ does. Those who are very disruptive are transferred to the Administrative Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

common characteristics and who individually or collectively engage [in], or have engaged in any activity which poses a threat to the safety of offenders, staff, or the community” (National Major Gang Task Force, “Model format for establishing prison security threat group policy and plan,” p. 1).

Although definitions may vary, creating a working definition of an STG is less complicated than determining how many offenders claim an affiliation. Calculating the number of active STG members and associates within the nation’s prison systems is an inexact science. Little uniformity exists in validating prison gang members across agencies. The percentages of the prison population classified as belonging to an STG vary, and the data are suspect, as not every department documents affiliation or uses consistent criteria to identify membership. A survey of 44 correctional systems in the United States revealed a wide discrepancy in the percentage of gang members in the inmate population, and prison systems in California and Illinois, two states synonymous with the rebirth of modern gangs, did not respond to the survey (“Gangs: Survey summary,” 2004). However, a 2005 gang threat assessment, compiled by the National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations (NAGIA), reported that 11.7% of inmates in the BOP had engaged in gang-related activity, with 13.4% and 15.6% of offenders in state prisons and jails, respectively, involved in gangs (NAGIA, 2005).¹⁰⁵ Michael Mukasey, former U.S. Attorney General, in his “Report to Congress on the Growth of Violent Street Gangs in Suburban Areas”

¹⁰⁵ According to the *2005 National Gang Threat Assessment*, 455 local, state and federal law enforcement agencies throughout the United States were surveyed, and data were aggregated according to region (i.e., Northeast, South, Midwest and West). The report acknowledged that its findings were “not representative of the nation as a whole, nor [were they] based on a statistically valid sample” (p. 1).

(U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), noted that, as of March 2008, approximately 20,800 individuals in federal custody had been identified as “being affiliated” with an STG. Despite the BOP’s calculations, Fleisher and Decker (2001, “An overview of the challenge”), citing Fong and Buentello (1991), consider the “secretive” nature of prison gangs as another barrier to providing a true estimate of the number of inmates who are active – for the gang-involved offender, being a participant in a research study is not of paramount importance, and, for the correctional agency, being protective of acquired gang intelligence is (p. 3).

Each correctional system determines through agency policy what a prison gang is and is not, inevitably influencing how the gangs and prison administration interact with one another based on the power of the gang label. Once the system classifies a group as an STG or prison gang, the group is no longer treated as individual associations, but rather it advances as an entity with which to be reckoned – and this designation involves other logistical considerations (i.e., increased expense to house an offender in Ad Seg versus a double-cell or dormitory setting in the general population, additional correctional staff to supervise and maintain safety, etc.). Some criminal justice agency personnel, including outside law enforcement who deal with prison gangsters once they are released back into the communities, may question and challenge a prison administration’s internal policies, expecting the process to classify a group as a validated STG to be a black-and-white issue, and ignoring the domino effect of such a decision. For example, tangos have been cited as an increasing law enforcement problem on the street and in prison (Schiller, 2010; Texas Department of Public Safety, 2011), but they do not meet the prison system’s

criteria to be considered an STG under current policy (Vogel, 2007). Texas law enforcement may consider them a prison gang because they meet the legal definition of a “criminal street gang” under Texas statute¹⁰⁶ and are a gang *in prison*, but not all are familiar with TDCJ’s strict policy for classifying groups as STGs.

Security Threat Group Development

Based on the evolution of STGs within the Texas prison system, Buentello, Fong and Vogel (1991) devised a five-stage continuum of prison gang development that acknowledges members’ initial “fraternal” reasons for joining and their later commitment to a criminal way of life, both inside and outside of prison:

Stage 1: Inmates gather for protection and align with those who share similar cultural values (i.e., it is their first time in prison, and they are scared of the unexpected; they have similar religious backgrounds; etc.). A 1991 National Institute of Corrections (NIC) report on prison gang management strategies differentiated between these legitimate “inmate groups” and prison gangs:

Inmate groups can develop around almost any similarity, including geography or religion, although most are organized around race or ethnicity. In any correctional facility, inmates tend to be divided into small, competitive social units. Most institutions have formally organized racial, cultural, and religious organizations to serve and structure these units. These organized groups differ from gangs in that they have been granted legitimacy, either formally or informally, within the institution. Many have a positive value in meeting inmates’ needs for cultural identity, religion, or leisure time activity (“Management strategies in disturbances,” p. 1).

¹⁰⁶ See Article 71.01(d), Texas Penal Code.

This parallels Clemmer's (1940) concept of "prisonization," as inmates acclimate to the prison environment and adjust to the inmate code of conduct, or the unspoken and understood norms and values of prison life (Sykes, 1958), as Wood and Adler (2001) contend.¹⁰⁷

Stage 2: Inmates form cliques using unit rules and regulations to keep one another safe and in line. The same culture on the street, with its unwritten rules for navigating the street landscape, affects the prison culture. When these inmates are released from prison to the free world, they disband and return to their pre-incarceration lives.

Stage 3: Inmates gather in groups for self-protection and choose leadership in prison.

Stage 4: Inmates transform into a predator group, create a constitution and rules by which their members must abide, and choose leadership, but they ultimately disband when they return to the streets.

Stage 5: Inmates are classified as a Security Threat Group, maintain a lifetime commitment to the group, engage in organized criminal activity, and do not disband when outside prison walls.

Wood and Adler (2001) remark that although the Buentello, Fong and Vogel "adaptation process" model "make[s] intuitive sense" (p. 173), no tests have been conducted to determine if prison gang members do progress through these stages. The model does, however, emphasize that "prisoner cohesion does not necessarily indicate gang existence" (Wood & Adler, 2001, p. 173).

¹⁰⁷ "Prisonization" and the inmate code of conduct will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

Again, the formation of social groups based on similarities is a natural process, regardless of physical location or circumstance.

Classifying Security Threat Groups and Validating Security Threat Group Members

A 2004 survey of correctional agencies elicited a variety of gang identification and management strategies employed throughout the nation's prison systems ("Gangs: Survey summary," 2004). Because the consequences of prison gang membership are severe, offenders are not validated as STG members on whim. An overview of the confirmation, or validation, process for prison gang members within the Texas prison system will be presented in the next section.

STG Management Office (STGMO) Organization in TDCJ

In October 1996, the Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) was established within TDCJ's Classification and Records Department. The STGMO is responsible for ensuring that the validation or confirmation process – that is, how individual inmates are labeled as an "STG member" based on strict, objective criteria that the agency has established to determine prison gang involvement – is adhered to and for networking with other local, state and federal agencies to disseminate gang-related information to heighten safety and security of not only staff and inmates but also the public. In essence, the STGMO provides internal oversight for the STG offices located on designated facilities. (Maximum security units and those units confronted with greater prison gang activity have unit STG offices with an assigned sergeant; units without a separate

STG office have a correctional officer designated to monitor gang activity.¹⁰⁸) The STG officers and sergeants monitor gang affiliation, oversee gang identification, and submit “validation packets” on possible prison gang members that delineate the criteria and reasoning for classifying an inmate as a bona fide STG member. In addition to the administrative STGMO and the unit-level STG officers, TDCJ also employs Regional STG Coordinators (RSTGC) throughout the state. (TDCJ is divided into six regions, each with its own STG coordinator.) The RSTGC is responsible for, among other duties, keeping the STGMO in Huntsville apprised of gang activity in the prison facilities within his or her respective region; supervising the STG sergeants and correctional officers within each region; providing training; and providing expert testimony in court. Although RSTGCs are part of the STG family, and one might surmise that they report to the STGMO, they essentially have multiple bosses: the STGMO in Huntsville, unit wardens, and their respective region’s director.¹⁰⁹ The structure of the prison system, with its layers of supervision and bureaucracy, rivals that of the prison gangs they monitor.

By 1999, TDCJ unabashedly admitted that in the early 1980s, they learned “what not to do” to manage the emerging gang problem: “We ignored the problem....We let them organize and recruit. We ignored the warning

¹⁰⁸ Simply because units have an STG office or officer assigned to this role does not mean the officer devotes all of his or her time to this position. Past conversations with TDCJ employees revealed that they are often at the mercy of the warden and immediate staffing needs of the unit. For example, a warden whose unit has a shortage of correctional officers may assign the designated STG sergeant to work “chow hall” and monitor offenders in the cafeteria, rather than tending to his or her job duties monitoring STG-related activity.

¹⁰⁹ Just as the RSTGCs are responsible for the STG offices in the six regions of the state, the Regional Director is responsible for all unit operations in a specified number of prisons in his or her designated region.

signs....We became reactive instead of proactive,” according to then-assistant director of the STGMO, Salvador “Sammy” Buentello (National Institute of Corrections, 2000, “Correctional strategies in gang management”). Acknowledging a fulfilled wish list from a responsive state legislature, TDCJ created a “central intelligence unit” (the STGMO); assigned STG officers on every unit, coupled with a Regional STG Coordinator in each of the six geographic regions of the state to oversee STG operations; sought “legislative assistance” to make the possession of a weapon in prison a felony; having time be served consecutively and not concurrently for violent offenses committed in prison; implemented a Crime Stoppers “Behind the Walls” program;¹¹⁰ created the Texas Violent Gang Task Force to promote the dissemination of gang intelligence and foster interagency collaboration among law enforcement, corrections, and other criminal justice agencies involved in the investigation, suppression and prosecution of gangs;¹¹¹ and implemented a “special prosecution unit” to rigorously prosecute felonies committed inside the prison walls by both inmates and prison staff (National Institute of Corrections, 2000, “Correctional strategies in gang management”). One TDCJ warden admitted that this legislatively-created prosecution office has indeed “taken the glamour away from being a gang member” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

¹¹⁰ For more information on this program, the first of its kind in a state prison, visit the Crime Stoppers “Behind the Walls” Web site at http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/oig/oig_crime_stoppers.html

¹¹¹ See Article 61.10, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

TDCJ and STG Member Validation

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice adheres to strict criteria and a review process before an offender can be classified, or validated, as a prison gang member.¹¹² The process generally originates at the unit level, with the STG officer, to whom inmates commonly refer as the “GI” (or “Gang Intelligence” officer), documenting suspected gang affiliation. Tattoos,¹¹³ possession of gang-related paraphernalia (such as drawings) and correspondence, photos depicting association, self-admission, unit-level investigations, law enforcement intelligence to corroborate agency findings, and information from reliable informants are all evaluated in the confirmation process (“Gangs: Survey summary,” 2004). Once the STG officer has compiled the necessary documentation, the “packet” begins its journey throughout the agency to determine if the suspected offender meets the criteria for gang membership. According to a Texas prison gang official, the packet is

taken to the Warden, Assistant Warden and the Chief of Classification. They decide at the unit level [if the requirements for gang affiliation have been met]. Then it is sent to the Regional STG Coordinator who checks it again. [The Regional Coordinator] signs it if [he or she] concurs [with the designation]. Then it is sent to the Security Threat Group Management Office [STGMO]. The STGMO then makes the final decision[, so] it is not

¹¹² Although TDCJ as an agency was not affected by the more stringent changes in the statutorily-mandated criteria for documenting criminal street gang members in a law enforcement database in September 1999 (and revised in September 2009), some criminal justice personnel felt law enforcement agencies were finally catching up to the stricter criteria that TDCJ implemented in the mid-1980s as a result of the increase in gang violence in prison.

¹¹³ Confirming or validating tattoos for STGs are distinct from tattoos that may be common to other street gangs. A confirming tattoo is specific to a particular STG, rather than a generic tattoo that any offender may wear. For example, tattoos of a swastika or schutzstaffel (double-lightning bolts) may indicate a belief in White supremacist or neo-Nazi ideology, but these tattoos *in and of themselves* are not sufficient to validate an inmate as a member of one of the identified STGs, such as Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, Aryan Circle or Texas Mafia.

one person making the decision [to validate or not validate an offender as a member of an STG] (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005).

The validation process is not unlike the concept of inter-rater reliability or, in group therapy terms, consensual validation¹¹⁴ (Yalom, 1995, p. 20).¹¹⁵ Those offenders who display some signs of gang membership but do not meet TDCJ's criteria for confirmation may be classified as "suspected" gang members until TDCJ receives or becomes aware of additional information that would change an individual's status from "suspected" to "confirmed."

Despite the internal checks and balances, the agency, as a matter of standard practice, does not afford identified and confirmed STG members an opportunity to examine the evidence used to validate them (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005). But can an offender refute the evidence and challenge the agency's decision?¹¹⁶ According to an STG official, prison gang members who do question it often offer an "explanation" why they were tagged, perhaps wrongly, as a gang member (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005). In TDCJ, evidence and documentation are reserved for inmate files, and copies are not freely handed over to the offender. Inmates who are validated as STG members may choose to negotiate the agency's legal maze and request to view the evidence against them, but they often come up with less than expected,

¹¹⁴ Consensual validation, according to Yalom (1995), is achieved "through comparing one's interpersonal evaluations with those of others" (p. 20).

¹¹⁵ The process is similar for those offenders who have been erroneously identified as STG members. A separate form is completed, along with relevant documentation, and the STG officer at the unit level submits the information to the Classification Committee and the Regional STG Coordinator for a decision. Once the Regional Coordinator determines the offender has been inaccurately confirmed as an STG member, the paperwork is forwarded to the STGMO for definitive approval before "removing the jacket," or taking off the STG label.

¹¹⁶ Question posed during a meeting of the American Bar Association's Prisoners' Rights and Legal Standards Task Force in Austin, Texas, on May 1, 2005.

as the legal department decides what information is exempt from release (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005). Agency officials must again balance the safety and security of the majority of offenders with the rights of the accused, as the release of certain information may compromise the safety of other inmates and staff and the security of the facility.

An Exercise in Comparative Validation: California versus Texas

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), two of the largest prison systems with arguably two of the largest prison gang populations, have established similar validation processes. Using California's approach as a comparison, this next section might foreshadow the future of TDCJ's process.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, like TDCJ, relies upon a variety of sources aimed at establishing gang membership, as enumerated in its Department Operations Manual's "Prison Gang Identification Methods" (includes, but is not limited to, tattoos and symbols, involvement in gang-related activity, information from a reliable informant, court transcripts, and verbal and written communication depicting gang affiliation or association).¹¹⁷ Documentation is forwarded to an Institutional Gang Investigator who initiates the investigation, and, similar to the chain of review TDCJ has implemented, the information inches its way to the unit captain, then to the Special Services Unit,

¹¹⁷ For a complete list of sources, see CDCR's *Department Operations Manual, Section 61020.7, Prison Gang Identification Methods*, page 526.

and finally to the Validation Review Committee before a finding of gang membership or association is rendered.¹¹⁸

The California prison system's testimony before the state's Senate Select Committee on the California Correctional System in September 2003 revealed that inmates are invited into the process, and, as one California prison official elaborated, "Every point of evidence that's not confidential [is discussed with the offender]" (pp. 12-13). But according to testimony from Charles Carbone, then-attorney with the prisoners' rights group, California Prison Focus, an offender's opportunity to challenge evidence is "the exception rather than the rule" (California Senate Hearing, 2003, p. 3).

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has since retooled its gang validation process in order to comply with the 2004 *Castillo v. Alameida* settlement. Originally filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in August 1994, *Castillo* challenged the constitutionality of CDCR's gang validation and management processes ("Settlement agreement," 2005). California prison officials must now disclose the information used to validate an inmate. According to a California prison gang investigator, they are also

mandated to conduct a face-to-face interview with the gang member prior to submitting the validation package and disclosing the points of validation being submitted. Regarding any confidential information used, we have specific forms developed...which give a brief description of the nature of the information and the reasons the information is deemed reliable. This is done to the degree possible without disclosing the identity of the source of information (C.D., personal communication, May 4, 2005).

¹¹⁸ For the complete identification process, see CDCR's *Department Operations Manual, Article 22: Gang Management*.

Additionally, before gang members can be sentenced to an “indeterminate SHU [Security Housing Unit] term as a validated gang member,” he must first be found to be a “current, active gang member” (“Settlement agreement,” 2005, p. 7).¹¹⁹

The validation process in Texas does not require that an overt behavior accompany an offender’s status as a prison gang member prior to being transferred to Ad Seg. The label in and of itself – which may or may not contain elements of this behavior (gang-related activity is one of several criteria for validation, and these offenses, if used as such, do not have to have occurred within the prison setting) – is sufficient for indefinite placement in Ad Seg. Charles Carbone and former Senator Richard Polanco, chair of California’s Joint Committee on Prison Construction and Operation in 2003, recommended CDCR modify its definition of gang activity to reflect a “behavioral approach...in movement away from the predictive behavior” (California Senate Hearing, 2003, p. 8).¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ In Blatchford’s *The Black Hand* (2008), former California Mexican Mafia (Eme) member Rene “Boxer” Enriquez describes the Eme’s “interest in using politicians Romero, Polanco, [former Senator] Hayden, and [Senator] Vasconcellos to further [the gang’s] goals....‘One of our objectives is to infiltrate legitimate politicians,’ explained Rene, ‘if not by overtly corrupting them, through subtle corruption by having our voices in place. Romero [and] Polanco...listen to Steve Castillo, and Steve Castillo listened to La Eme’” (p. 271). Steve Castillo, the plaintiff in *Castillo v. Alameida*, was considered a CDCR jailhouse lawyer and “Eme associate” (p. 275) whose “cause” – to eventually close the Security Housing Unit (SHU) and release “‘hundreds of prisoners’ [who] were misidentified as gang affiliates with ‘flimsy and trivial’ information” (p. 275) into the general population – was “championed by Senator Romero” (p. 275). Calling the senator “naïve” (p. 279), Enriquez offered his opinion on her limited understanding of how a prison gang like La Eme and its members operate: “‘She doesn’t understand....There are Eme members...who are just bitter, vicious, evil men who have no place in society. All they seek to do is destroy because they are miserable and want others to be miserable’” (p. 279).

¹²⁰ In March 2012, CDCR released its proposed “Security Threat Group Prevention, Identification and Management Strategy.” Designed as a “proactive” strategy to “significantly reduce or eliminate the influence of gangs and the effects of gang violence” (p. 26) in California prisons, the document outlines a “Step Down Program” (SDP), a five-step, voluntary, incentive-based process that provides STG members with the opportunities to “disengage from criminal gang behavior” (p. 27) and eventually transition from segregation (or a SHU) to general population or placement in a

Prison Administration Responses to Prison Gangs

“The solution to the problem, the whole thing? There isn't any. It's like asking for world peace. It's not going to happen. My deal is to manage, to control it.”

–TDCJ prison gang coordinator (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007)

Prison administrators have responded to the rise in prison gangs primarily in two distinct ways: suppression and intervention (Carlson, 2001). Various strategies have been used to target the behavior, including isolating gang leaders (however, another individual may step in to fill the vacancy, which may lead to further intra-gang violence among those wishing to take the helm; or segregated prison gang members may appeal to other prison cliques or street-based gangs to partner with them to continue their criminal activity while segregated,¹²¹ with

Sensitive Needs Yard (SNY). A “minimum of 12 months program participation” (p. 27) is required for each step before the offender is permitted to progress to the next phase. Upon successful completion of the first four steps, the offender advances to Step Five, where he is monitored and observed in general population or an SNY for another 12 months. (Refer to the document for detailed information on the revised STG certification process, STG member validation process, STG management plan [including programming requirements and privileges afforded current SHU offenders and future SDP participants, and program components for each step-down phase], and plans for implementation. The strategy, however, is not without its critics. The executive director of the Prison Law Office, which provides free legal services to inmates in California prisons, admits the “proposal [has] benefits” (Goode, 2012, “Fighting a drawn-out battle”), but deemed the four years required to complete the first four steps “too long for inmates to wait to work their way out of solitary” (Goode, 2012, “Fighting a drawn-out battle”). (See also “Pelican Bay Human Rights Movement Counter Proposal,” a 22-page handwritten document submitted to CDCR officials by California prisoners, along with Sal Rodriguez’s article, “Inmates in Solitary Confinement in California Respond to Prison Policy Reforms” [2012].)

¹²¹ According to the Anti-Defamation League (2002), when California Aryan Brotherhood (AB) members were banished to various Security Housing Units, members “found a way to elude prison authorities by lending support to a new prison gang, the Nazi Low Riders” (p. 16). The Nazi Low Riders (NLR) originated in the California Youth Authority in the late 1970s-early 1980s and initially acted as the farm club for the California AB. Since then, NLR has flourished as a prison gang and maintained connections with other skinhead and White supremacist groups.

Along similar lines, leadership often appears fluid, as other ranking members may express frustration and even displeasure with the way the gang business is being handled, or the direction in which the gang is headed, and factions may splinter off with each new branch welcoming new leadership. Also, prison gang leadership is not limited to the state facilities. Each prison gang may have a hierarchically-structured leadership within state facilities and within state regions (for example, a gang may divide up the state and its facilities into several regions, with leaders for each region who are responsible for activity and membership in the state prisons in an

the focus on leadership to not necessarily dismantle the gang, but at least temper its effects); documenting criteria in a prisoner's file to substantiate gang involvement; transferring members to out-of-state facilities (although this may potentially facilitate exporting gangs, especially to the federal prison system¹²² and inundating its facilities with a "new breed of federal inmates" [Thornton, 2010]¹²³); creating renouncement programs; or designating "gang-free" environments (Fleisher & Decker, 2001, "An overview of the challenge"). Despite increasing numbers of identified gang members, some departments, such as the New York City Department of Correction and New York state prisons, do not separate gang members from other offenders (New York State Commission of Investigation, 2006, p. 30), citing a "[belief] that separating gang members only emboldens and legitimizes gangs" (p. 30).

New York facilities house rival gang members together, forcing them to interact with each other on a daily basis. Just as they must learn to co-exist in a law-abiding society, they must learn to co-exist inside the

identified region of the state); leaders are also identified in the free world. To further complicate the issue, prison gangs in the federal prison system also boast their own leadership. Ranking positions are not necessarily transferable from one system to the next (i.e., if Member X is a ranking member in a Texas prison and is later transferred to the federal system, his rank may not accompany him). Thus, segregating only the leaders and identifying the leaders is easier said than done, and does not end the activity.

¹²² For example, a 2010 federal law enforcement operation against a local street gang in California netted arrests of 34 high-level members. A U.S. attorney involved in the case stated, "If they're convicted federally, they're not going to Pelican Bay [state prison in northern California], they're not going to Folsom [state prison near Sacramento, California], they're going to Texas or wherever someplace very far away from their cohorts, [making it] very difficult for them to communicate..." (KMPH Fox 26, 2010, "34 arrests made in south valley street gang sweep"). And the export of gang members continues.

¹²³ Thornton describes the recent change in the type of inmate sentenced to federal correctional facilities. Inmates are "younger, riotous and gang-connected," primarily as a result of gang members, including those from criminal street and prison gangs and drug trafficking organizations, being tried under federal statutes, such as the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is transforming from its caricatured "Club Fed" image to one that mirrors the hard time of state institutions.

facilities without violence. Correction officials hope that forced social interaction will have a humanizing effect and gang members will begin to view their rivals as individuals (p. 30).

“Forced social interaction” has now become an untested rehabilitative and management technique.

According to Fleisher and Decker (2001, “An overview of the challenge”), no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of each of these strategies in reducing gang affiliation, gang violence or criminal activity inside prison walls. Winterdyk and Ruddell (2010) surveyed U.S. state and federal prison systems on the prevalence of STGs, their conduct, reasons for affiliation, and perceived effectiveness of gang management strategies.¹²⁴ Seventy-five percent of respondents reported the use of segregation and isolation as “very effective” in managing STG members’ behavior, adding that sanctions, such as privilege restrictions, were also considered “very effective” (p. 734). The authors caution that, despite the participants’ enthusiasm for these “effective” strategies, only 20% acknowledged having formally evaluated their management strategies, thus “mak[ing] it difficult for other jurisdictions to adopt such practices as they are not ‘evidence-based’” (p. 734). The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC), for example, initiated its Security Threat Group Management Unit (STGMU) in 1998, and, according to testimony by Ron Holvey, principal investigator in the department’s Gang Intelligence Unit, only “core members [who are] further identified as either a leader...or...troublemaker” are recommended for placement in the unit (New Jersey Office of Legislative Services, 2006, p. 76). The department recorded an 84% decrease in the incidence of “organized violent

¹²⁴ Fifty-three jurisdictions were contacted and 37 completed the surveys (response rate = 69.8%). A list of participating jurisdictions was not provided; it is not known if Texas responded.

behavior” (p. 80) that it attributed to prison gangs. Coupled with a 33% re-arrest rate for those offenders released from the STGMU, the NJDOC deemed the program effective. However, when a member of the task force questioned the effectiveness of a program that had “no documentation” on if the offenders returned to the gang (p. 85), Investigator Holvey offered an explanation that is congruent with the lack of research on these strategies:

To answer that question, I guess I would have to explain to you the theory behind the Security Threat Group Management Unit, okay? We offer a program called the Security Threat Group Management Unit. It’s a program. It’s not a punitive sanction. The inmates who participate, not willingly, in the program, don’t do it again – don’t do it willingly. So the chances...of making them ex-gang members are pretty slim....When we developed the Security Threat Group Management Unit, we knew this....[Our] goal, and this is sometimes hard for the general public to understand, but *our goal was not to make ex-gang members* [italics added]....[That] would be...a secondary benefit....Our primary goal for establishing this unit was to have safer prisons. And in that regard, it’s very effective (p. 85).

The less-than-rigorous and virtually non-existent evaluations of prison gang management strategies are the backbone of departmental policy. Either that, or the narrowly-defined measure of effectiveness hinges only on the immediate physical safety and not on future behavior upon release to the general prison population or the free world.

Despite the paucity of data, the overwhelmingly popular solution has been control and containment through the use of administrative segregation (commonly referred to as Ad Seg).¹²⁵ Ad Seg is often an immediate solution to

¹²⁵ For a brief overview of the use of segregation in U.S. prisons and the Vera Institute of Justice’s Segregation Reduction Project, see Browne, A., Cambier, A. & Agha, S. (2011). Prisons within prisons: The use of segregation in the United States. *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, 24(1), 46-49.

an immediate problem, presented as a permanent solution to a permanent and persistent problem. Fred Cohen, Professor Emeritus of Criminal Justice at SUNY-Albany, commented on the lack of a theoretical basis for this form of isolation, instead defining its use as “purely a matter of administrative response to what’s perceived to be troublesome behavior” (Cohen, 2005, p. 165).¹²⁶ In November 2008, the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) conducted a survey of its members and found that only 24% of the 27 responding departments of corrections had “specific protocols in place to identify” offenders opting for renunciation (ASCA, 2009, p. 2). The use of Ad Seg has become the status quo for prison policy management, while renunciation programs remain an unevaluated and novel response.

Many of the aforementioned management strategies are guided by both a proactive and reactive policy – correctional officials proactively confirm prison gang members, but reactively handle members administratively. Sound correctional policy does not advocate the immediate release of thousands of currently segregated prison gang members who are only soldiers and the continued confinement of ranking members, especially since internal strife and fighting are the norm for many STGs, with leadership consistently influx. A soldier today might advance in the gang ranks tomorrow. It is, however, the prison administration’s response that may exacerbate or alleviate the problem of prison gangs, especially since suppression has “the potential to hamper prisoner reentry and integration into the community” (Griffin, 2007, p. 225).

¹²⁶ Fred Cohen’s expert testimony on isolation provided during the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons in 2005-2006 did not explicitly address prison gang behavior, but rather focused on the general use of isolation and segregation in prisons.

Administrative Segregation: “Is Ad Seg a Program or a Place?”¹²⁷

Ad Seg is in the *TDCJ Offender Orientation Handbook* as a “non-punitive status involving separation of an offender from the general population for the purpose of maintaining safety, security and order” (TDCJ, 2004, p. 49). Offenders may be placed in Ad Seg for a limited number of reasons, all compatible with the prison’s goal to maintain safety and security: “security detention, pre-hearing detention, protective custody, [and] temporary detention between consecutive terms of solitary confinement” (TDCJ, 2004, p. 49).¹²⁸ Solitary confinement is described as a status of last resort; that is, an offender is segregated if progressively restrictive alternatives have not been successful due to his behavior, if his behavior threatens the safety of staff and inmates or the security of the facility, or if the serious nature of the offense deems it necessary. Offenders may be sent to solitary confinement for up to 15 days and are then subject to review. According to Renaud (2002), the behavior of offenders in Ad Seg is “reviewed every three to six months for possible upgrades in level and in custody” (p. 37). But are STG members in segregation afforded this same periodic review? An ex-STG member who informally renounced on his own and has since been released from custody characterized the Ad Seg review process more bluntly: “[It’s] a joke” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005). An STG member in Ad Seg is a somewhat forgotten man, unless he continues to be disruptive and his behavior warrants him being remembered.

¹²⁷ Question posed by Joe Lehman, then-Secretary of Corrections for Washington State, during a meeting of the American Bar Association’s Prisoners’ Rights and Legal Standards Task Force in Austin, Texas, on May 1, 2005.

¹²⁸ See Glossary of Terms in Chapter 1 for detailed information on these four categories of Ad Seg.

If an offender's behavior continues to deteriorate while in Ad Seg, and the self-fulfilling prophecy evident (that is, Ad Seg begets disruptive behavior, which begets semi-permanent residence in Ad Seg), the offender may remain segregated for as long as he poses a danger. Should placement in Ad Seg based on gang membership be combined with behavior?¹²⁹ As previously mentioned, critics of CDCR's gang validation and management processes argued that the prerequisite for placement in a Security Housing Unit (SHU) or Ad Seg should progress from a "predictive" model to behavior-based, clarifying that with CDCR, "punishment through segregation [is administered] according to their potential to commit violence, rather than any actual act of violence" (Carbone, 2003, "Testimony from the Senate Select Committee on the California correctional system," p. 3). It is unknown, however, how many validated prison gang members are segregated as a result of convictions for violent and assaultive offenses – indicating a greater propensity for violence – as opposed to in-prison investigations that revealed only membership without the overt behavior.

While placement in Ad Seg based on gang status may arguably be justified for offenders prone to violence based on past behavior, it leaves itself open to abuse and the possibility of the "over-classification" of offenders. Griffin (2007) points out that "suppression policies" employ a "fairly unrestrictive definition of gang involvement" (p. 227), which chances the over-identification of offenders "not in need of additional control" (p. 227). DeMaio (2001), in his

¹²⁹ Question posed by Joe Lehman during a meeting of the American Bar Association's Prisoners' Rights and Legal Standards Task Force in Austin, Texas, on May 1, 2005.

review of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections' use of the Supermax, argues for "narrow and well-defined [standards of admission]." The fact that a Supermax exists just around the corner makes it that much more likely to be used, even for offenders who may be able to function in a less restrictive environment. Ad Seg status for a gang member is equivalent to an incarceration limbo, as an offender may be given a one-way ticket with no imminent return date as long as he is deemed a danger based on his gangster tag.

Financial Cost of Segregation

While prison gang members account for a relatively small percentage of the total TDCJ prison population, the financial costs are much higher. In Fiscal Year 2002, the average cost per day for an inmate in Ad Seg was \$61.63 (with \$40.24 of that directed toward security costs) compared to an inmate in the general prison population at \$42.46 (and only \$21.07 toward security costs), according to the now-defunct Texas Criminal Justice Policy Council (2003, p. 12).¹³⁰ Offenders placed in segregation must be shackled and cuffed and escorted by at least two correctional staff whenever they are removed from their cells, unlike general population inmates who are afforded greater movement within the facility.

¹³⁰ For FY 2010, the average system-wide cost per day per bed for a TDCJ offender was \$50.79 (Texas Legislative Budget Board, 2011, p. 6). For a complete breakdown of cost per day for offenders in State Jails, medical programs, Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facilities, private prisons, etc., see Texas Legislative Budget Board's *Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report: Fiscal Years 2008-2010*.

Constitutionality of Ad Seg for Prison Gang Members

The goal of prison gang policy, according to Jacobs (2001), should be to diminish the “size, power, and influence of gangs” (p. vi), while balancing this with the constitutional right of due process with the safety and security of staff and other inmates. Are “constitutionally sufficient conditions” alone constitutionally acceptable (Carlson, 2001, p. 21)? Renaud (2002) asserts that Ad Seg is a “living assignment” and is not classified as punishment (p. 33); therefore, the right to due process is not necessary (i.e., no need for counsel, or for charges to be enumerated; and no right to confront witnesses).¹³¹

Prison administrators must struggle with honoring a utilitarian approach to safety versus respecting gang members’ constitutional rights and due process. Are the needs and rights of one group more worthy and deserving than the needs and rights of another? The agency’s responsibility is to maintain security and protect staff and inmates from the violence, intimidation and extortion synonymous with prison gangs. The federal courts have repeatedly upheld the decisions of prison administrators to implement Ad Seg policies for validated gang members. Do these rulings apply to those placed indefinitely in Ad Seg due to gang status, or does one need to be physically assaultive or otherwise non-compliant before being placed in solitary confinement or a Security Housing Unit? Is gang affiliation alone sufficient? In *Koch v. Lewis*, 96 F.Supp.2d 949 [D.Ariz.2000], the U.S. District Court of Arizona ruled that an inmate can be validated as a gang member and subsequently segregated without “a finding of misconduct” (cited in Eckhart, 2001).

¹³¹ See *Hewitt v. Helms*, 103 S.Ct. 864, 1983 and *Toussaint v. McCarthy*, 801 F.2d 1080, 9th Cir. 1986 (Renaud, 2002, pp. 33-34).

The settlement in California's *Castillo v. Alameida* also promises to make prison officials more accountable in the way they implement the validation and gang management process. The California prison system is now "required to give the prisoner notice of the considered source items [and] prior to approval of validation,[... will be] required to ask for and record (i.e. document) an inmate's views on the considered source items and forward the inmate's views to the validation decision makers..." (Carbone, 2005, "Attorney client communication"). This may be a small but necessary step toward offender involvement and legitimacy.

Additionally, reviews of offenders in Ad Seg for gang affiliation should be conducted with greater predictability and consistency, as is the case for those in segregation due to disciplinary infractions. Tachiki (1995) presses for greater due process procedures when segregation is a result of gang membership and not a disciplinary reason. *Ruiz v. Estelle*, notes Renaud in his survival guide for Texas inmates and their families (2002), included in its "totality of circumstances" deplorable Texas prison conditions in which offenders were placed in "dungeon-like solitary confinement without the slightest nod to due process" (p. xx).

Necessity of Ad Seg, But for Whom?

The Texas prison system has approximately 9,700 Ad Seg beds for a prison population of 150,000;¹³² as of August 31, 2011, 8,784 male and female offenders were in Ad Seg (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet,

¹³² These numbers were based on public testimony provided to the Texas House of Representatives, House Corrections Committee, on April 28, 2005, in support of House Bill 1529, relating to access to in-cell education for Ad Seg inmates in TDCJ.

Fourth Quarter FY 2011).¹³³ Abandoning the use and concept of administrative segregation is highly improbable. Select offenders will continue to fashion firearms out of faucet parts and prey on the weak and vulnerable. For those who repeatedly prove they are unable to follow the rules of the game, separation may be the only alternative. However, Joe Lehman, former Secretary of Corrections for Washington State, explains that only a “small percentage of offenders need this” (American Bar Association, Prisoners’ Rights and Legal Standards Task Force, Austin, Texas, May 1, 2005). Fred Cohen of SUNY-Albany suggests Ad Seg was designed as a “confession of failure” and an agency’s admission that there are some offenders it simply cannot control or manage.¹³⁴ Has segregation become a psychologically damaging way for prison administrators to save face?

Unintended Consequences of Segregating STG Members

Despite Ad Seg’s popularity in prison gang management, the strategy may have backfired, exacerbating an ever-increasing problem.

Lack of Available Programming

On the surface, administrative segregation appears to combine many of the standard goals of incarceration, including punishment, deterrence and incapacitation (DeMaio, 2001), into one neatly packaged concept. Rehabilitation, however, is a naively hoped-for consequence, something that just *happens* when a segregated offender realizes the error of his ways and magically alters his behavior to mirror that of general population offenders who have earned

¹³³ These figures represent both male and female TDCJ offenders, including confirmed STG members, placed in Ad Seg.

¹³⁴ Comments made by Fred Cohen during a meeting of the American Bar Association’s Prisoners’ Rights and Legal Standards Task Force in Austin, Texas, on May 1, 2005.

privileges. But is it realistic to expect an offender who lives in Ad Seg – and in his own mind – to maintain a grasp on reality without the benefit of daily structure and therapeutic programs?

Even though isolated in Ad Seg, gang members can still pose a serious threat to other inmates, correctional staff, and rivals in the free world. With little incentive and little opportunity, offenders in segregation find themselves with ample time to focus on the “‘justice’ factor,” as researcher Michael Jackson (2001) recounted in an interview with a segregated inmate in Canada:

“If I’m out in population and I’m going to school, I’m focused on something and I’m learning. When I’m in segregation, I feel I’m being treated unfairly and I’m focused on thinking how to pay people back. All I’m thinking about is bitterness because that’s the only way to keep going” (p. 114).

One high-ranking Blood member echoed this sentiment in a documentary chronicling the North Carolina Department of Corrections’ efforts at “total control”: Segregation “‘doesn’t make me better. It makes me angrier [and] makes me want to retaliate’” (National Geographic Channel, 2007). But a Nazi Low Rider prison gang member in California’s Pelican Bay State Prison described segregation as his “comfort zone,” adding, “‘This is where I’m most focused’” (National Geographic Channel, 2006). How does a system’s attempts to fulfill its secondary mission of rehabilitation and reintegration compete with its wards’ resignation that minimal positive human interaction and mind-numbing sensory deprivation are “comfortable”?¹³⁵

¹³⁵ This offender eventually did renounce his gang affiliation, debriefed with prison gang investigators, and joined other “dropouts,” or members who also had renounced, in a transitional housing unit.

Renaud (2002) notes that, unlike the Supermax-type Security Housing Units (SHU) of California's Pelican Bay State Prison (which is a sterile fortress of nothing but isolation cells), TDCJ's segregation differs, based on pre- or post-*Ruiz* construction. In older units, Ad Seg is just another wing in the prison, with inmates still subject to the sights and sounds of the daily-ness of prison through their cell doors, which are more heavily-barred and screened than those in general population cellblocks; however, in the newer units built after the *Ruiz* decision and during the Texas prison boom, Ad Seg wings more closely resemble those in a Supermax, with heavy steel doors and a slit for a window, if one at all, and another in the door to catch an officer passing by or to flash gang signs to an inmate in a twin cell on the opposite side or on an upper tier. Former Harvard Medical School psychiatrist Dr. Stuart Grassian, in his 2005 testimony before the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, stressed the importance of a facility's design, with something as simple as a window, to maintain a segregated inmate's sanity:

I once spoke to an inmate who was at Pelican Bay, which has no windows, and he had been at Tehachapi, another state prison in California, in the [SHU]. He spent the whole day looking out of a window watching people hang gliding and doing whatever they were doing. That kept him alive, kept him involved in the world. And Pelican Bay, by design, had none of that, nothing to see (pp. 201-202).

In TDCJ, Ad Seg is equated with very few, if any, privileges.¹³⁶ According to the *TDCJ Offender Orientation Handbook* (2004), inmates who are classified

¹³⁶ During the 80th Texas Legislative Regular Session, Representative Hodge introduced House Bill No. 47 that would have established a TDCJ policy to provide in-cell education to offenders in Ad Seg, but only if it could be provided without posing a threat to prison staff or other inmates. During her testimony on March 5, 2007, Rep. Hodge explained that for the 9,370 offenders in Ad Seg at the time (this number includes all male and female offenders in segregation, not solely confirmed STG members), educational materials were not provided for those in Ad Seg. She

as STG members may not have contact visits, cannot leave their cells without being cuffed and shackled, do not accumulate good time credit, and are not able to participate in educational, vocational or therapeutic programs (p. 26). Self-imposed structure and routine are the only options, according to an ex-STG member who spent 20 months in Ad Seg in TDCJ: “[You] need to fill 23 hours a day, you get used to it, and you get institutionalized” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005). Not exactly a ringing endorsement for quality programming. Sanity is difficult to hold onto if all one has is a “radio, fan, hot pot and books” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005). When questioned about his daily routine in Ad Seg, this former offender remarked that “most sit in bed and listen to the radio. I studied, read books, and made use of my time” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005).

For many offenders in Ad Seg, “making use of their time” does not come easily. A psychological downward spiral, however, does. Past research has catalogued the psychologically damaging effects of solitary confinement and administrative segregation on prisoners. Sykes (1958), citing Kingsley Davis, noted that the “structure of the human personality is so much a product of social interaction that when this interaction ceases it tends to decay” (p. 6, citing Davis, 1949, p. 152). In a comprehensive review of the literature, Haney and Lynch

further noted that 1,539 inmates were released in 2006 directly from Ad Seg to the community at the end of their sentences, including those who had been considered security threats or escape risks. On June 15, 2007, Texas Governor Rick Perry vetoed the bill, explaining that such an opportunity “would run counter to the purpose of administrative segregation, divert important education resources from other offenders, and highlight concerns the legislature has with educating offenders in administrative segregation.” He cited the purpose of Ad Seg was to “punish offenders who are serious behavior problems,” and the loss of educational and vocational opportunities is one of those consequences of being placed in Ad Seg (Texas Governor’s Office, 2007).

(1997) chronicled the laundry list of effects that hasten this decay, including sleep disturbances, auditory and visual hallucinations, paranoia, self-mutilation and abuse, and anxiety. Inmates become walking poster children for a myriad of disorders listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. They conclude that “there is not a single study of solitary confinement wherein *non-voluntary* [italics added] confinement that lasted longer than 10 days failed to result in negative psychological effects” (Haney & Lynch, 1997).¹³⁷ Ad Seg exacerbates any dysfunction and, according to Kassel (1998) in his article on the segregation of gang members in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, it inadvertently “creates the need for gang deprogramming in many prisoners.” One warden with TDCJ admitted that “once you put [a gang member who arrives at a Texas prison from the county jail] in Ad Seg, he tapers down,” but acknowledged that the deprivation of life in solitary confinement “really gets after him” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). This dysfunction is not only internalized, but also eventually manifests itself externally through their behavior upon release, and clearly counters the prison system’s mission to reintegrate offenders:

My philosophy there is sometimes we create the monster. And to a certain extent, these STG guys, some of them will tell you that after enduring lockdown for so long, “I’m never coming back to the penitentiary again because I’m already confirmed [as an STG member], but when I get back out...I’m not going back to prison. You’re gonna have to kill me.” I think we elevate their sense of what they’re prepared to do in a crime... (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

¹³⁷ In a 1998 *ABC Nightline* interview at TDCJ’s Estelle Unit, the prison psychologist disagreed with the degree of documented psychological effects of solitary confinement, stating, “Sometimes it has absolutely no effect...and then other people will have some effect from the deprivation of stimulus[,] but I find that’s a very small percentage” (Koppel, 1998).

It is necessary to understand the effects of Ad Seg and the psychological impact solitary confinement has on an individual in order to grasp the degree of resocialization needed to get an inmate in long-term segregation back to where he started. But the research is more than convincing that Ad Seg affects offenders in ways that would make any institution bent on “fixing” them (whether through rehabilitation, resocialization, or forced compliance and control) take five steps back for every one step forward, at least when it pertains to their mental health and subsequent behavior. No one can dispute the effects of solitary confinement on the human psyche, especially on that of an offender who already lacks keen judgment, insight and impulse control. One offender who successfully renounced and completed the GRAD process in TDCJ pointedly commented in his graduation testimonial that he thought he could re-think and re-wire his perception of the world by reading voraciously while in Ad Seg. He surmised he could analyze his life and the path he took and make the necessary changes, but then he realized he lacked the tools to do this, as he kept applying his own “thinking errors” to his current situation. Resigned to the fact that he could neither think nor will himself to change his behavior on his own, he learned how to do this once in GRAD. It also bears reminding that correctional officers working in Ad Seg and on cellblocks are “breathing the same canned air, sitting under the same fluorescent lights, listening to the same noises” (Kerness, 2005, p. 4) as the offenders they supervise. As one lieutenant characterized his transformation over the years, “I’m cold; I’m hard. I don’t care....I’m institutionalized” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 36). Officers may go home at the end of their shifts, but the vicarious effects of segregation and prison linger.

While past research has chronicled segregation's adverse psychological effects, a recent year-long longitudinal study by O'Keefe, Klebe, Stucker, Sturm and Leggett (2011) further examined this chicken-and-egg scenario: Does placement in "long-term segregation" exacerbate mental illness? Hypothesizing that offenders in Ad Seg would (1) not only psychologically deteriorate and develop "SHU syndrome" symptoms (p. 5)¹³⁸ over the course of the study, but also decompensate more than inmates in the comparison groups who were in general population and a prison psychiatric setting, and (2) worsen over time, while those inmates with mental illness would decompensate even further, the researchers administered a battery of standardized psychological tests at three-month intervals over the course of a year to 247 literate male offenders confined in the Colorado Department of Corrections.¹³⁹ They found that while all of the groups, at the beginning of the study, exhibited "SHU syndrome" symptoms – which were "more serious for the mentally ill than non-mentally ill" (p. 78) – over the course of the study, the majority of offenders demonstrated no change in symptoms. Twenty percent of the inmates actually showed improvement, with only 7% worsening.¹⁴⁰ All groups also revealed "initial improvement in psychological well-being" (p. 78) during the first two testing periods, "followed by

¹³⁸ Symptoms of "SHU syndrome," as described by Dr. Grassian, include "perceptual changes, affective disturbances, cognitive difficulties, disturbing thought content, and impulse control problems that immediately subside following release from such confinement" (O'Keefe et al., 2011, p. 5).

¹³⁹ The sample included Ad Seg offenders and two comparison groups: offenders in general population and those in a psychiatric prison facility. The sample was divided into offenders in each placement with mental illness and those without (i.e., Ad Seg offenders with and without mental illness, general population offenders with and without, and another comparison group of inmates in a psychiatric setting who suffered from severe mental illness, but were not placed in segregation).

¹⁴⁰ The "greatest amount of negative change" (p. 78) in symptoms occurred in those inmates placed in the psychiatric setting and not in segregation.

relative stability for the remainder of the study” (p. 78).¹⁴¹ Despite these comparatively optimistic findings, the authors suggest the focus on the effects of segregation progress beyond “is it enough to avoid harm” to “what are the conditions required to *improve* inmates’ mental well-being while in segregation” (p. 82)?

Extended Family and Communication

In an effort to curb wayward communication and decrease the violence associated with gang-related activity, TDCJ modified its rules for written correspondence in May 2003, restricting offender-to-offender correspondence.¹⁴² This change, however, is not without an unintended consequence – the increasing likelihood of family members becoming involved in the gang’s business, whether they are informed participants or not. Constitutions generally prohibit individuals outside the gang itself from involvement, but now relatives may be used to forward messages from one incarcerated member to another (P.F., personal communication, April 5, 2005). The mailman may deliver in rain, sleet and snow, but family can deliver through brick and mortar.

Extended family for the imprisoned gang member moves beyond consanguinity; street gang and STG members inside and outside of prison continue to conduct business on behalf of their incarcerated “brothers” and facilitate communication between the two worlds. Members utilize a

¹⁴¹ The authors note that, although “largely inconsistent with...the bulk of literature that indicates [Ad Seg] is extremely detrimental to inmates with and without mental illness” (p. 78), their findings should be interpreted with caution and should not be generalized to other prison systems whose Ad Seg conditions differ from those of Colorado. They also concede that it is “possible [deleterious effects] do not appear until after longer periods of segregation” (p. 80).

¹⁴² See pp. 3-4 of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Board Policy BP-03.91 (rev. 2) on “Uniform Offender Correspondence Rules” for a complete list of “restricted correspondents.”

smorgasbord of seemingly-covert communication to circumvent prison policies, including the use of mail drops and third-party addresses, and written gang business masquerading as “legal mail” for non-existent attorneys. Members also incorporate hidden codes that are a tad more sophisticated than those used by schoolchildren trying to stay a step ahead of vigilant parents. Tic-tac-toe boards with circles and lines, apparently random patterns of numbers (random only to those, including prison staff, not privy to the codes), and other variations are used to pull a fast one on staff and relay messages to other members. Drawings on envelopes of incoming and outgoing personal mail (now prohibited by TDCJ) prove a rose is not just a rose or a pyramid not just an Aztec ruin. Instead, hidden images are strategically incorporated into the drawing to convey affiliation, possible hits, and the like (Ward, 1998, “Special report: Secret codes”).¹⁴³ A *Los Angeles Times* article reprinted in the *Houston Chronicle* further elaborated on how gang members relay messages and acknowledge gang affiliation with members inside and outside of prison through the use of birthday cards – innocent cards that, to the untrained eye, evoke a sentimental response of how sweet it is to remember a loved one in prison, but the reality of the message conveyed is anything but (Fausset, 2004). Additionally, the court system, the enemy for so many offenders, may be reframed into their unwitting accomplice and co-conspirator. Subpoenaed witnesses gathered in court under the pretense of being a necessity for testimony, when in reality, it may be a convenient, if circumstantially-suspect, way in which to discuss business, either

¹⁴³ See Ward, 1998, “Special report: Secret codes,” for these and other methods inmates use to pass along messages.

en route on a prison bus to the courtroom, or in a meeting room, or to carry out an assault on a particular person.¹⁴⁴

Isolation Fosters Cohesion

Kassel (1998), in his treatise on the Massachusetts Department of Corrections' gang policies, states that past gang research has perpetuated a "conspiracy" dominated view of gangs" (p. 6) that drives suppression responses within correctional institutions. Prison gangs are characterized as perhaps being more cohesive than they truly are, and members more violent and predatory. He warns that such "exaggerated views...can convert myth into reality" (p. 6). Additionally, members are "forced to rely on each other for human contact and support, since there is no other source" (p. 7). Communication, verbal and non-verbal, threatening or innocent, is vital if members are to remain connected to others, however tenuous the bond.

Sykes, in his classic study, *The Society of Captives* (1958), listed the various "argot roles" of inmates, from the "real man" to the "punk," and noted that the increased "inmate solidarity" (p. 107) and cohesion lessened the "pains of imprisonment" (p. 107). He elaborated that

[a] cohesive inmate society provides the prisoner with a meaningful social group with which he can identify himself and which will support him in his battles against his condemners – and thus the prisoner can at least in part escape the fearful isolation of the convicted offender (p. 107).

¹⁴⁴ See *60 Minutes* segment, "La Eme," on the California Mexican Mafia, which aired on February 23, 1997, and illustrated how Rene Enriquez and another Eme member stabbed a third Eme member 26 times in an attorney visiting room in the Los Angeles Men's Central Jail (Hamlin, 1997). For a complete synopsis of the incident, see Blatchford's *The Black Hand* (2008), Chapter 17, "Die Like a Man, You Punk" (pp. 105-111).

Rallying around a common enemy – in this case, prison administration – presents offenders with an opportunity to collectively withdraw, if only momentarily, from their reality in segregation. In this respect, segregation further mitigates the long-range goals of rehabilitation and reintegration.

The physical proximity of being placed in Ad Seg with like-minded gangsters also may manifest itself in greater cohesion. According to one Texas warden,

If you [specifically] put [members from one gang] together, you make them more cohesive because you're recognizing them, and that's what they want. They want that formal recognition that "we are a force to be contended with." Instead of putting them in a small, compact car, you just made yourself a diesel truck, because they're getting together as one entity (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

When TDCJ began to identify and segregate prison gang members in the mid-1980s, this warden, then a major responsible for one facility's segregation unit, refused to follow the instructions proposed by the then-STG coordinator for the prison system, which was to house all members of each prison gang together in one "row":

My philosophy was...I separated them. I put an [Aryan Brotherhood of Texas] member in one cell, the cell next to him would be [Texas Syndicate], the cell next to him would be Mexican Mafia. They were interspersed. I'd put non-gang members in there. And I did that for [the safety of] my officers because I thought if the convict had to watch the guy on either side of him, he wouldn't be watching my officer (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ An additional benefit to segregating gang members from different gangs in alternating cells is the "disrupt[ion]" of their lines of communication, resulting in a "[loss] of contact" with their fellow members (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). For management, this bonus of divisiveness among STG members has the potential to increase the chances of their eventual renunciation.

By anticipating the system-sanctioned legitimacy and strength granted the offenders if *like* was placed next to *like*, the warden sidestepped a similar “miscalculation” (Renaud, 2002, p. xiii) from the pre-*Ruiz* days. During the 1970s, Texas prison officials, in a failed attempt to “ban” a particular attorney, Frances Jalet, from meeting with her incarcerated clients, relocated the “jailhouse lawyers” to one facility (Renaud, 2002) to isolate them and lessen their influence. Instead, this group became even more unified and was able “to share information, tactics, and strategy” (Renaud, 2002, p. xix; see also Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987). Anthony Delgado, STG Investigation Coordinator for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, concurred, offering the cogent argument that isolating members from the same gang on a unit – as was done years earlier for the group of Texas writ-writers – is tantamount to “giv[ing] them...negative power” (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, 2006, “Addressing violence,” p. 118).

Reinforces Identity as Gang Member and Promotes Solidarity among Homies

Institutional segregation may not only foster group cohesion among prison gang members, but also reinforce their identity as gang members, especially as it pertains to race and cultural identity. Gang identity is pounded into them, as it is one of the few “powerful” identities offered in prison, which further complicates reintegration into the general population and reentry into the community (Fleisher & Decker, 2001, “Going home, staying home”). Joan Moore (1978), in her classic study on Hispanic gangs in Los Angeles, California, interviewed San Quentin Prison staff in 1970 to find out how they viewed Hispanic (Chicano)

inmates, especially since Hispanics were over-represented in the California prison system. They were viewed as “alien” due to the language barrier and with a hint of suspicion due to cultural differences (p. 97). Prison staff resorted to stereotypical views to place the inmates’ behavior in context; that is, machismo and a “tendency to violence connected with factional struggles for power” (p. 97) became the lens through which prison staff filtered and interpreted their behavior.

Kassel (1998) further contends that “cultural stereotyping” on behalf of prison officials and “racial biases built into the official classification system” unfairly target minority offenders (p. 6). In TDCJ, seven of the 12 identified STGs are Hispanic-based. Renaud (2002), referring to the greater numbers of Hispanic offenders who are labeled as prison gang members and placed in solitary confinement, per TDCJ policy, says that correctional officers assigned to Ad Seg “will tell you...the least trouble given them is by the Hispanic gang members, who have strict codes that govern them while they are in ad/seg” (p. 36). Although he intimates they may be less overtly physically threatening, “trouble” may be a relative term, as members continue to conduct gang business in the free world from behind the walls. If someone is dangerous, does it matter if the danger posed is inside prison or outside in the community? “Less trouble” in prison makes for good statistics for TDCJ and its bid for safety and security, but the potential to reach out into the community and transfer the threat from prison to the free world has been shown time and again. Hispanic gang members may find their “relationships are strengthened by kin-like obligations that have consequences in prison” (Moore, 1978, p. 99), whereby older gang

members assume a paternalistic role for younger offenders from their neighborhood.

And just as legitimate employment and educational opportunities are limited in the real world for the Hispanic gang member, they are perceived to be equally distant within the prison setting. Moore (1978) explains that prison “continues to operate in the context of a familistic style that itself represents the major continuity” (p. 103) between life on the street and in prison. In this context, renunciation of gang membership, especially for a Hispanic prison gang member, may be even more problematic, as gang membership is central to his identity.

Giving Gang Members a Second Chance: “Who Gave Them Their First?”¹⁴⁶

Although Father Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California, was talking specifically about street gang members when he posed the question above, the same sentiment can be applied to prison gang members who find themselves committed to life in a box.

Some states, including Texas, have been looking beyond Ad Seg and beyond control and containment to offer alternatives to solitary confinement for STG members.¹⁴⁷ Fleisher and Decker (2001, “An overview of the challenge”)

¹⁴⁶ Father Gregory Boyle, Homeboy Industries, in Cooper, A. (2005, April 10). *CNN presents: Homicide in Hollenbeck* [Television broadcast]. Atlanta, GA: Cable News Network.

¹⁴⁷ During the 82nd Texas Legislative Regular Session, Representative Marquez introduced Committee Substitute House Bill (CSHB) 3764 that would have required TDCJ to submit annual reports to the Governor and select members of the Texas Legislature on the use of Ad Seg in Texas prisons. The goals, according to Rep. Marquez, were to “change the system so that the harsh effects [of Ad Seg] are lessened and to reduce [associated] costs” (Marquez, 2011). In addition to reporting various statistics on offenders in both general population and Ad Seg, including the number of inmates referred for mental health services, recidivism rates for those discharged from Ad Seg, length of time served in Ad Seg, etc., the bill proposed that TDCJ draft a plan to reduce its reliance on Ad Seg. The bill also explicitly stated that TDCJ must “develop...a program that provides an opportunity for an inmate who is confined in [Ad Seg] based on the inmate’s membership in a gang or security threat group to return to the general prison population

suggest prison administrators focus on a holistic approach to treatment for gang members, citing Sheldon's 1991 comparison study of 120 gang-affiliated and non-gang-affiliated inmates. Despite similarities on demographic variables, such as socioeconomic status, marital status and education, and substance abuse, Sheldon found gang members were more likely to have been arrested as a juvenile, less likely to be consistently employed, and had more arrests than those not claiming gang membership. Along these same lines, Krienert and Fleisher (2001) interviewed 704 Nebraska inmates, of whom 12% reported street gang affiliation. They found gang membership to be synonymous with low income, less stable employment, less commitment to being employed, and lower educational achievement. They concluded that gang-affiliated inmates had a "high level of programming need" (p. 56), a need that is not currently met by being housed indefinitely in Ad Seg.

Byrne and Hummer (2007) also reviewed 14 studies between 1984 and 2006 that addressed the impact of prison classification and inmate characteristics, including gang involvement, on prison violence. They concluded that classification policies aimed at controlling offenders to reduce and predict violence do not work; instead, these goals can be achieved by focusing on individual offender change (p. 532). "Control-based classification systems" (p. 537) lack the empirical evidence, according to Byrne and Hummer (2007), to increase prison safety, yet prison systems that embrace inmate programming

[once he has renounced his membership]. The program *may not exceed eight months in length* [italics added]" (Texas House of Representatives, 2011, p. 5). (The GRAD process, which TDCJ implemented in 2000 and was designed to accomplish precisely what CSHB 3764 recommends for STG members who want out of segregation, is currently nine months in length.) The bill made its way out of the House Corrections Committee, but did not advance further in the process.

can (p. 537). It may be that long-term safety and a reduction in violence are jeopardized when “control-based classification systems” become standard operating procedure, rather than an immediate, albeit reactive, interim policy. One Texas warden commented that

the thing about controlling a prison, if you show control, knowledge of what's going on, the inmates have confidence that you know what you're doing. But if you let a maximum security facility display to the inmate population that the warden doesn't know what's going on, and they don't have the gumption to do whatever, that's going to create...anarchy...on this side because there's no more respect for the administration (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

It might be enough to know that administration can provide that safety, security and structure that permit offenders to breathe a sigh of relief so they can participate in and focus on programming, and look out for their fronts (and future) instead of always watching their backs.

Release from Segregation: How Fare Thee Well

Segregation impacts how well inmates not only cope psychologically, but also handle their release directly to the free world. Craig (2004) interprets early prison reform's reliance on solitary confinement as a “means of rendering inmates harmless while incarcerated, advertising this as a stepping stone to the greater goal of rendering them harmless upon their release” (p. 95S). Physically containing offenders in Ad Seg may bolster the system's argument for safety and security, but this belies the implied transference of “harmlessness” when released. In Texas in Fiscal Year 2010, 1,313 male and female offenders were released directly from Ad Seg to the community, with 495 released on parole and

818 discharged with no supervision (TDCJ Administrative Segregation Reference Sheet, Fourth Quarter FY 2011). It is unknown how each has fared, but if the results of a 2007 study by Lovell, Johnson and Cain are any indication, then a return trip to prison is more likely than not.

In their study of the influence of placement in a Supermax facility on recidivism, Lovell et al. (2007) hypothesized that (1) offenders who spent “substantial portions of their prison terms in supermax” (p. 636) would be more likely to commit new felonies within three years of their release from prison, (2) those released directly from segregation without transitioning to general population prior to release were more likely to commit new felonies, and (3) released offenders would “reoffend more quickly” (p. 636) if they had served time in the Supermax setting. Matching Supermax¹⁴⁸ and general population (“nonsupermax”) male offenders in Washington State released in 1997-1998 on “eight predictors of recidivism other than supermax status” (p. 636),¹⁴⁹ the authors found that “supermax status was significantly associated with higher rates of recidivism only for those supermax offenders released directly from supermax to the community” (pp. 644-645) (compared to those “later-release” offenders who transitioned from Supermax to the general population at least 90

¹⁴⁸ Supermax offenders included in the study were required to have been in segregation for at least 12 weeks and had to have served prison terms of at least six months.

¹⁴⁹ These control variables included the number of past offenses (to indicate if the offender was a “first-time, repeat, or chronically repetitive felony offender” [p. 639]), age (young, middle-age or old), race/ethnicity, age of release from prison, and presence of mental illness.

days before release). The data also revealed “no significant association between recidivism and the amount of time inmates spent in supermax, once control variables were taken into account” (p. 651); thus, only direct release from segregation to the free world was significantly associated with felony recidivism (p. 649). And not only did these offenders recidivate sooner than the “later-release Supermax” and general population offenders, they also committed new felonies at a higher rate. Lovell et al. offer possible explanations for these differences, suggesting that Supermax inmates may be able to “recover their equilibrium” (p. 650) from the psychological effects of segregation if they are first able to transition to “social prison settings before release” (p. 650). However, they also acknowledge the self-fulfilling prophecy that if the offenders’ “combative, antisocial, or impulsive” (p. 650) behavior warrants confinement in segregation until the last second of their sentence, and if they are unable to control their behavior while in prison, then it is “not surprising” (p. 650) that becoming a law-abiding citizen overnight – or three years’ worth of overnights, which is when the recidivism clock begins to tick – is elusive.

In step with the above findings, the Mississippi Department of Corrections (DOC) illustrates the benefits of transitioning offenders from segregation to general population. Precipitated by litigation in 2005 condemning squalid living conditions and substandard mental health care, among other issues, in Unit 32, the 1,000-cell Supermax of the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, and

assuming a “mostly collaborative [relationship]” (Kupers, Dronet, Winter, Austin, Kelly, Cartier, Morris, Hanlon, Sparkman, Kumar, Vincent, Norris, Nagel, & McBride, 2009, p. 1039) with the courts, the DOC revised its classification system and protocol for assigning inmates to “permanent administrative segregation” (pp. 1039-1040).¹⁵⁰ Prison administrators unflinchingly proceeded with the recommended revisions and began the unit’s “striking transformation” (p. 1040), despite turmoil in mid-2007 and an “outburst of gang warfare” (p. 1040) among inmates in the unit. Deputy Commissioner Emmitt Sparkman even

live[d] at Parchman for months, overseeing the release of several hundred *carefully selected* [italics added] men into general population, walking among them, speaking and interacting with them,...showing his staff at the prison that these men were not so dangerous that they needed to be in administrative segregation (p. 1040).

Within a few months, approximately 75% of Unit 32’s segregated inmates had been released to general population. The DOC reported an overall decline in the number of “serious incidents” (prisoner-on-prisoner and prisoner-on-staff) and staff’s use of force (p. 1043) between 2006 and 2008.

The prison system then established new criteria for placement in administrative segregation: only if the individual (1) has “committed serious infractions;” (2) has been identified as an “active high-level” gang member; or (3) has a history of escapes or attempted escapes from prison (p. 1041). Also implemented was a process to release many of the offenders from segregation to

¹⁵⁰ The DOC had an offender population of approximately 21,000 in 2009 (p. 1045).

general population within 12 months.¹⁵¹ The department also created a transitional phase program – a “step-down unit” (p. 1042) – for inmates not able to immediately return to general population and for general population inmates with serious mental illness. The authors noted that “most of the Security Threat Group leadership” who participated in the step-down unit “successfully graduated” (p. 1046). No other information was available regarding STG members and how they fared upon return to population.

With fewer offenders indefinitely serving their sentences in segregation, Unit 32 finally closed in 2010 (Goode, 2012, “Prisons rethink isolation”).¹⁵²

We Don’t Need No Stinkin’ Correctional Theory, or Do We: The Theory Behind the Process

Before considering the implementation of alternative programming, including TDCJ’s GRAD process, to combat the use of segregation as a gang management strategy, resocialization theory and the premise that it is a viable rehabilitative option for incarcerated prison gang members must be reviewed. This next section will explore the theoretical basis for why the Texas prison

¹⁵¹ No other details were provided, except that criteria for this process were “modeled” after one implemented at the Ohio Department of Corrections (p. 1041).

¹⁵² In February 2010, the Vera Institute of Justice, an “independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit center for justice policy and practice” (Jacobson, 2012, p. 1), implemented its Segregation Reduction Project (SRP) to collaborate with state departments of corrections “to safely reduce the number of prisoners held in segregation by facilitating policy changes that: (a) reassess the violations that qualify a prisoner for segregation and (b) recalibrate the length of stay... [,]improving conditions of confinement[,]... and enhancing programming and support for safe transitions back to the general population” (Jacobson, 2012, p. 3). One of the recommendations Michael Jacobson, Vera president and director, proposed before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary in June 2012 was to provide programming with “opportunities for gradual resocialization” for prisoners released from segregation to the general population (p. 9). For more information on the SRP, visit the Vera Institute of Justice at <http://www.vera.org/project/segregation-reduction-project>.

system, or any system that subscribes to STG management through segregation but seeks an alternative, would expect resocialization through renunciation and reintegration into the general offender population to be a feasible management strategy.

THEORY

In *The Society of Captives* (1958), the classic exploratory study of prison as a closed social system, Gresham Sykes encapsulates the difficulty in resocializing and effecting internal change in offenders – any offender – within the prison context: “Of all the tasks which the prison is called upon to perform, none is more ambiguous than the task of changing criminals into noncriminals” (p. 17). The endgame for resocialization is the internalization of values, those beliefs that are “shared by all...members [of a group] and therefore give them a common identity over and above their particular roles, and against the coexistence of other groups” (McHugh, 1966, p. 357). These newly introduced values are generally foreign to and inconsistent with the culture in which members already belong. It is a complete overhaul of an individual’s personality, imbuing him with new norms and ways in which he conducts himself. And if such a goal can be accomplished, how does a segregated offender make this transformation *stick* without the in-your-face social controls of the prison environment once he returns to the general population or the free world?

Resocialization encompasses changing thought, changing the core being, and changing the perception of self and others. Few studies have been conducted on the process of resocializing offenders, let alone gang members, in closed systems. Fischer and Geiger (1991) assessed resocialization efforts for

offenders placed in Israeli *kibbutzim*,¹⁵³ and others examined the behavior of street gang imports, or street gang members who were sentenced to prison and brought their street gang culture with them (DiPlacido, Simon, Witte, Gu & Wong, 2006; Hunt et al., 1993; Jacobs, 1974). Grouping street and prison gang members altogether for research purposes does not tease out the fundamental differences between the groups, as catalogued earlier in this chapter. Prison gang members ascribe to rules and a lifelong commitment that denounce and contradict the concept of renunciation and attempts at resocialization into law-abiding citizens. The remainder of this chapter will address the layers of culture (street, gang, prison and prison gang) each must confront and strip away on the road to resocialization.

Institutional Context: Seeing Beyond the Individual

On June 7, 1998, James Byrd, Jr., an African-American male, was tortured and murdered in Jasper, Texas, by three White men who had met one another in the Texas prison system and subsequently joined the Confederate Knights of America, a White supremacist group. During trial, the defense attorney for one of the suspects “admitted the significance of the prison experience. ‘What I do know,’ he told jurors, ‘is [this defendant] wasn’t a racist when he went in. He was when he came out’” (Anti-Defamation League, 2002, p. 2). Clearly individuals are susceptible to being socialized into a criminal and

¹⁵³ A *kibbutz* (plural: *kibbutzim*) is a communal living experience that espouses the virtues of work, democracy and egalitarianism. It is a “community characterized by strong primary relationships, norms and social control,” as explained by Fischer and Geiger (1991, p. 9). Only one participant in their study, however, was tagged with gang involvement (i.e., the offender was “convicted of throwing a hand grenade at a man during gang warfare” [p. 44]). It is unknown if this was street gang- or terrorism-related.

racist subculture in prison, but can that process be reversed under those same conditions?

Prison, characterized by Sykes (1958) as a “society within a society” (p. xxx), facilitates the naturally occurring process of group formation “to create and maintain total or almost total social control” (p. xxxii) of those in custody. Although correctional facilities differ in physical layout, custody and security levels, and population, similar processes govern the internal social structure (Sykes, 1958) and the offenders they shape. Success in change is not dependent solely upon resocializing the inmates; the complete institutional context must be examined (including the interplay between administration and inmate, and the perception of self and others), as these “total institutions,” according to Goffman (1961), are “the forcing houses for changing persons; [with] each [acting as...] a natural experiment on what can be done to the self” (p. 12). Goffman (1961) further describes a “total institution” as a “place of residence and work where a large number of like situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. xiii). These individuals are physically separated from the outside world (Goffman, 1961) and their lives suspended in real time as they become acclimated to this new environment. Each lives, works and recreates together and under the same roof. No one is treated as an individual, and daily life is highly structured and regimented.

But prison, “an instrument of the State” (Sykes, 1958, p. 8), like the lives of the offenders it manages, is “shaped by its social environment [...and...] as a social system, does not exist in isolation any more than the criminal within the

prison exists in isolation as an individual..." (Sykes, 1958, pp. 8-9). Within the institutional context, individual personality characteristics assume a peripheral role in explaining offender behavior and misconduct: "In certain circumstances it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he is placed that determines his actions" (Milgram, 1965, p. 72). "Context of action" cannot be ignored; however, acknowledging the influence of "place" on individual behavior is not equated with relinquishing individual responsibility. An offender, gang-involved or not, enters prison with certain values and beliefs and a foot in one or more cultures, and he must learn to adapt to yet another.

Haney, Banks and Zimbardo (1973), in their "simulated" prison experiment at Stanford University, countered the "dispositional hypothesis" that predicted that prisons are the way they are because guards are insensitive and innately sadistic, and all inmates are violent and brutal (p. 70) and trapped in a Hobbesian bubble. They looked beyond the acts of individual offenders and officers (in this case, those respondents participating in the experiment) and into the design and context of the prison environment that allowed such behavior to thrive.¹⁵⁴ Misconduct could no longer be blamed only on individual actors with disregard for the system acting upon them; yet prison officials continue to isolate the troublemakers, assuming that lone individuals with complete free will are solely responsible for the violence. Gould (2003) concludes from the Stanford prison experiment that the "environment of prison may be a considerable factor in the development of the criminal personality" (p. 1-12). Citing Foucault's *Discipline*

¹⁵⁴ It is unknown if the experiment would have had a different outcome if the "guards" had received training, were guided by policies and procedures, and had competent, if any, identifiable leadership.

and Punish (1979), Gould acknowledges the correctional system as “a self-sustaining industry...that...continue[s] and perpetuate[s] criminal subculture values and responses” (p. 1-17). Prison becomes a behemoth “doer” that dictates and directs inmate behavior. But this does not imply that inmates are mindless pawns, subject to complete custodial control. If that were so, then any attempt at resocialization inside prison walls would be a wasted attempt.

Instead of treating the individual gang member and viewing gang membership as an isolated occurrence, prison administrators must be able to pinpoint those forces perpetuating the gang behavior. Davis and Flannery (2001) touch on one aspect of this by arguing that officials “should not try to treat gangness but instead the problems that gang members bring with them” (p. 42) to prison, such as histories of physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, personality disorders and other mental health issues, and cultural factors. While their recommendation plays to repairing the individual offender and not necessarily the prison conditions that exacerbate the effects of these “problems,” they at least acknowledge that the gang member is more than the sum (“gangness”) of his individual parts. Haney (2006) alludes to the unintended consequences of reacting to individual behavior by emphasizing the importance of context: “[B]y viewing gang membership as a reflection of individual deviance, something to be suppressed through punishment, prison systems not only ensure the gangs’ continued existence but inadvertently enhance their power” (p. 219). Do gangs spontaneously appear because they are a product of prison culture, or is it just a part of normal human interaction to create structure and

form groups?¹⁵⁵ Although group formation is a natural process, how does the Texas system work within the parameters of what prison is and how it is organized to minimize the impact of prison gangs?

The “powerful social context” of prison (Haney, 2006, p. 161) also fosters “*situational pathologies* [by prison officials] taking actions that worsened the very problems that they were designed to address” (Haney, 2006, p. 200), such as overcrowding, idleness and lack of educational opportunities. According to Haney (2006),

By adopting strategies of repression and harsh control, correctional authorities quickly transformed prisons into more difficult places for prisoners to tolerate and even to survive. The precarious balance between the basic human needs and wants of prisoners and the coercive imperatives of the prison was lost (p. 201).

Within the Texas prison system, the policies implemented to contain the population of prison gang members were necessary to quash the violence in the mid-1980s and ensure the safety and security of staff and other inmates. Once the violence was under control, no one would dare suggest a return to a less restrictive and less punitive policy, lest the prison system embark on its own cinematic Groundhog Day. Part of the institutional culture is acceptance on the part of prisoners that this behavior and treatment are to be expected and, therefore, become familiar to them.

¹⁵⁵ For example, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation introduced “Sensitive Needs Yards” (SNYs) to house protective custody inmates who cannot live in general population dorms without fear for their personal safety. Soon prison staff began seeing a new group form, a group of inmates who had disassociated from their original prison gangs and were sent to the SNYs for their own safety (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Deciphering Rene Enriquez”). Even among the weak are the strong.

The next section begins with an examination of the various cultural contexts in which prison gang members belong. When addressing altering norms and values, and resocializing offenders, one must understand not only the prison context but also the layers of culture, those personal effects each inmate carries into the carceral experience, to understand first what must be undone.

“The Code of the Streets”: Guidelines for a Correct Gangster Response

“That’s my role model, man. That’s the CEO of the Crips.”

–Comment by 33-year-old male identified as “Killowatt the Third” at Stanley “Tookie” Williams’s funeral in California (CNN, 2005, “Hundreds gather”)¹⁵⁶

The reference group is one’s relative reality, a breeding ground for perspective and normative behavior. Each peripheral group has its own culture with norms and behaviors that conflict with those of the dominant culture, as society sets rules for what is appropriate and inappropriate.

For the gang member, as with all individuals, socialization often begins at home and with peers. Because many inner-city children lack the parental support and supervision, they “gravitate to the streets, where they ‘hang’” (Anderson, 1994, p. 6) and absorb, as if by osmosis, another culture that often conflicts yet coexists with that of mainstream society. Without structure and a sense of community, groups create their own cultures as “responses to social contexts” (Bankston III, 1998, p. 41), complete with norms and traditions, to

¹⁵⁶ Although Stanley “Tookie” Williams is often named as the co-founder of the Los Angeles-based Crips gang, it is argued that Raymond Washington was the sole teenager credited with forming the Crips in the late 1960s. Tookie’s legacy as co-founder, according to Sgt. Richard Valdemar (retired), Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, was a “story designed many years later by his media manipulators to give [him] some status he did not deserve” (Valdemar, 2007).

alleviate the chaos and uncertainty of a disorganized life. For gang members, both juvenile and long-involved adults, the process is no different.

Codes generally imply secrecy and privilege. Only those on the inside are afforded specific knowledge, although outsiders are aware of their existence. The governing norms and values appear distorted and even perverse in comparison to those of mainstream society. Elijah Anderson, in his essay, "The Code of the Streets" (1994) (and later expanded upon in his book, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* [1999]), explains that the code is a "set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence" (1994, p. 2), that "provides an element of social organization and actually lessens the probability of random violence" (1999, p. 27). The pervasive threat of random violence acts as an internal deterrent to anyone contemplating "acting stupid."

At the heart of these rules is the need "for negotiating respect" (1994, p. 2), as respect is inextricably linked with fear, violence, "identity and self-respect" (1994, p. 10). Anderson states that although "many of the forms that dissing [or disrespect] can take might seem petty to middle-class people (maintaining eye contact for too long, for example)[,...] to those invested in the street code" (1994, p. 2), these minor infractions are an affront to their social construction of reality.

To the "middle class" and other individuals not familiar with the street code and the ramifications for failing to abide by it, a separate and distinct morality clause might seem unnecessary. However, Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree uses witness intimidation to keenly illustrate the code of the street as it plays out in urban communities:

“A lot of white Americans from suburban communities can’t understand why people wouldn’t talk to law enforcement....But in a lot of inner-city communities, there is so much hostility to the police that many people of color can’t fathom why someone would even seriously consider helping them” (Kocieniewski, 2007, “So many crimes”).

In another case of witness intimidation involving the murder of a female Latin King gang member in Trenton, New Jersey, one of the local Latin King leaders charged with the crime casually denied the need for retribution against anyone talking to law enforcement – it was a given that one does not violate this tenet of the street code, and retaliation for such an act would be “almost inevitable” (Kocieniewski, 2007, “In prosecution of gang”).¹⁵⁷ The New Jersey Attorney General’s Office remarked that “witnesses who remain silent because they fear for their safety is probably less than one-tenth the number who refuse to talk because they fear the social repercussions” (Kocieniewski, 2007, “So many crimes”). The code of the street, with its unspoken rules, remains the law of the land, maintaining order in an “environment where...however much [the citizens] despise the gangs, [they] are more comfortable coexisting with the Bloods, Crips or Latin Kings than assisting the police” (Kocieniewski, 2007, “So many crimes”).

Researchers also have addressed the core beliefs inherent in the value systems of delinquent and gang-affiliated youth: honor (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Moore, 1978; Shelden et al., 1997; Vigil, 2002), “respect, pride (in oneself

¹⁵⁷ On a *60 Minutes* segment, “Stop Snitchin’,” that aired on April 22, 2007, rap artist Cam’ron admitted that even if he knew a serial killer lived next door to him, he would not contact the police to arrest the neighbor. The code of the street and its anti-snitch policy would compel him to move out of the area to a new community rather than dial 9-1-1. Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of Harlem Children’s Zone, Inc., attested to the fact that “no snitching” has infiltrated mainstream society: “When I was growing up, kids used to talk about snitching....It never extended as a cultural norm outside of the gangsters....It was not for regular citizens. It is now a cultural norm that is being preached in poor communities” (Court & Sharman, 2007).

and in one's neighborhood), reputation, recognition, and self-esteem" (Shelden et al., 1997, p.108) – values that, to varying degrees, are highly regarded in mainstream society. These are ultimately noble aspirations; however, the violent means to achieve them, as legislated by the code, conflict with the broader social contract and norms. Decker and Van Winkle (1996), in their field study of St. Louis gang members, found that most were "enmeshed in the culture of the street and were committed to its ideals well before they embraced those of the gang" (p. 276). But these two realities – gang versus normal, "street" or "decent," as Anderson (1994; 1999) labels them – often diverge in how the belief systems are created and maintained. While these attributes are viewed as strengths when possessed by law-abiding citizens ascribing to the moral code, they are reframed as negative and destructive when associated with "gangs." The broader society has defined good and bad, right and wrong, with little input from its "negative" standard, the criminal element. They are excluded, and this exclusion fosters a solidarity and cohesion among the marginalized.

This view does not differ greatly from the "code of the well-kept lawn" that expects neighborly introductions to include questions about where one lives or works. The difference lies with what is done with the response. If one indicates that he works for a well-respected company and lives in an upscale neighborhood, odds are great that he will not have to sidestep an oncoming bullet. But those adhering to the code of the street must live in a perpetual state of wariness and hyper-vigilance, not unlike the life of an inmate who must adapt to prison's own code in order to survive behind bars.

In addition to the aforementioned core beliefs, McEvoy, Erickson and Randolph (1997) identify other complementary “cultural values of courage, heroism, machismo and physical prowess” (p. 7), all of which may be placed on a continuum with a breach of conduct as the catalyst for violence. Battin, Hill, Abbott, Catalano and Hawkins (1998), in their study of the contribution of gang membership to delinquency, found that “gang membership intensified delinquent behavior” (p. 13), leading them to believe that an “enhancement model” of delinquency is a more appropriate framework. Thus, gangs gravitate toward aggressive youth when recruiting new members, as they share similar norms. Violence and aggression are admirable traits in a gang member, traits that may be fostered within the subculture of the street. The codes are then carried out through violence which, according to McEvoy et al. (1997), “serves a symbolic purpose: it represents group solidarity and group identity” (p. 4). Because physical aggression fosters cohesion among gang members, “moral constraints on violent impulses are seen as dysfunctional” (McEvoy et al., 1997, p. 3). Youth who internalize that “might makes right, and toughness is a virtue” (Anderson, 1994, p. 7) will be rewarded with varying degrees of respect and, in turn, higher status in the street hierarchy. Being tough and epitomizing the “badass” are viewed as “attacks on the conventions and clichés of civil demeanor” (Katz, 1988, p. 87). For the gangster who manages these, his street and future prison stock will rise.

Status, in the subculture of the streets, can be conferred upon a gang member who has the (mis-)fortune of arrest, conviction, and incarceration in an adult or juvenile facility. It is an earned commodity that, in essence, earns

respect; it is self-sustaining. It is either that or a timeout from life, a minor inconvenience, a detour to a hopeless destination. According to Jankowski (1991),

Chicano gangs in Los Angeles are less likely to be dissuaded from a venture by the risk of incarceration, because part of their status is associated with being imprisoned....[Imprisonment] has ceased to be something feared and become something expected....A gang member who has not been...incarcerated has not been an active and honorable member. Under this value system, Chicano gang members simultaneously abhor incarceration and look forward to it (p. 116).

Incarceration is to the gang member what senior partner is to an attorney – a promotion and a little extra attention at the company Christmas party. Anderson agrees that once on the inside, the “system loses influence over the hard core who are without jobs, with little perceptible stake in the system” (1994, p. 14). The lure of the code of the streets intensifies, prison becomes normalized, and inmates become mythical figures while incarcerated, heroes and role models upon release, and candidates for canonization upon death.

Inmate Culture and Prisonization

“The worst thing about prison is you have to live with other prisoners.”
–Inmate in New Jersey State Maximum Security Prison (quoted
in Sykes, *The Society of Captives*, 1958, p. 77)

Once the gang member graduates from the street to prison, he confronts an even more unforgiving prison and inmate culture with distinct values, norms and rules, some of which are not unlike those of the street. Before the prison culture can be addressed, the discussion turns toward the offender’s arrival and the personal effects – represented by the norms, values and culture – he brings with him from his backyard into the prison yard.

Code of the Street Exported from and Imported to Prison

Defined as “the collective, shared values and norms of the inmates in any given prison” (Camp & Gaes, 2005, p. 429), inmate culture has been the center of debate on its role as a “total institution” responsible for socializing inmates into prison life (Clemmer, 1940; Goffman, 1961; Hunt et al., 1993) and for being influenced by inmates arriving at prison with their criminal culture intact (Hunt et al., 1993; Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Past research has examined inmate behavior and prison violence primarily through two theoretical models addressing inmate culture: deprivation (Berg & DeLisi, 2006; Clemmer, 1940) and importation (Irwin & Cressey, 1962). Long the accepted models explaining the roots of criminal behavior inside prison, the deprivation and importation models are presented next, along with the more nuanced integrated and lifestyle-exposure models that capture the duality of the original two models.

Models of Inmate Behavior: How to Get Here from There

The Deprivation Model. According to this model, the prison environment directs inmate behavior (DeLisi, 2003). That is, the physical structure of the facility, security and management strategies, and administration’s views on management nourish the offender’s behavior in prison (Clemmer, 1940; Hochstetler & DeLisi, 2005). Inmates arrive with their own established culture, but upon admission, they are robbed of any identity, as the institution must contain and control the activities of large numbers of individuals (Goffman, 1961). Hochstetler and DeLisi (2005) determined that the “conditions of prison itself explained inmate misconduct even when controlling for inmate characteristics” (p. 258).

Sykes (1958) further addresses deprivation by logging several “pains of imprisonment” that influence offender behavior: (1) the “deprivation of liberty” (p. 65) and personal freedom and choice (including loss of contact with family and other external support systems); (2) the “deprivation of goods and services” (p. 67) (i.e., the standard and quality of life in prison can never equal that of the free world); (3) the “deprivation of heterosexual relationships” (p. 70); (4) the “deprivation of autonomy” (p. 73), where the inmate is subject to rigid and regimented schedules overseen by custodial staff; and (5) the “deprivation of security” (p. 76) (i.e., the fear that he is living among like-minded souls who may steal, rob or assault without notice). To overcompensate for these “pains,” individuals may gravitate to gangs for protection and engage in other behavior inconsistent with the prison’s goals yet, offenders believe, necessary for their survival.

The Importation Model. Simply stated, the importation model, as presented by Irwin and Cressey (1962), theorizes that offenders import their criminal beliefs and values into the prison, “focus[ing] on the influence of preprison socialization and experience” (Jiang & Fisher-Giorlando, 2002, p. 339). These characteristics, present prior to incarceration, influence one’s adaptation to and behavior in the prison setting (DeLisi, 2003; Hochstetler & DeLisi, 2005). Similar to the “code of the street” layer of personality that is not shed at the prison gate, this theoretical model of behavior and misconduct ties into the earlier-mentioned “Pepsi Generation” (Hunt et al., 1993), specifically as it relates to bringing the street culture into prison (Anti-Defamation League, 2002; Berg & DeLisi, 2006; DeLisi, 2003). The code of the street is intertwined with the inmate

code and prison culture, as if existing on a continuum that imparts stricter social controls with each progressive step.

The importation model has its supporters, as DeLisi (2003) argues that the “positive relationship between pre-prison criminality and criminal justice experience and prison misconduct offers some of the strongest evidence” (p. 657) for it. Berg and DeLisi (2006) elaborate that the “barriers between community and prison are porous and permit considerable transference of behaviors that influence inmate conduct” (p. 633). Irwin and Cressey (1962) assert that many in prison did not experience their first taste of institutional life upon admission to the adult system; rather, they most likely did stints as juveniles in detention settings or had other contact with law enforcement, and “bring with them a ready-made set of patterns which they apply to the new situation [for example, prison]” (p. 145). For Irwin and Cressey, observing how inmates behave in prison is not so much a result of the “conditions of imprisonment” (p. 145), as Sykes (1958) argues, as it is the conditions of a life lived and dictated by a criminal subculture. They identified three distinct cultures:

- (1) Criminal or thief subculture. This subculture is laden with career criminals whose beliefs and values transcend a particular physical location (p. 146). Irwin and Cressey identify it as the “thief subculture,” which is characterized by a few simple values, such as being reliable, trustworthy and clever, and no snitching or tattling on others. The individual immersed in this subculture is a criminal beyond prison walls and whose reach and influence extend far beyond the cellblock.

(2) Prison or convict subculture. The patterns and behavior intrinsic to this subculture “[flourish] in the environment of incarceration” (p. 147), and “status is to be achieved by the means made available in the prison” (p. 147), primarily the ability to influence others and “manipulate the environment” (p. 147). Offenders belonging to the prison or convict subculture yearn to make prison life comfortable for themselves and will manipulate others and jockey for position to do just that (for example, they might secure a coveted job in the kitchen so they may steal items to trade with fellow inmates). Along these lines, prison gang members maintain a dual foothold in both the criminal/thief and prison/convict subcultures.

(3) Conventional or legitimate subculture. These offenders ignore the criminal/thief and prison/convict subcultures and do their own time, causing few problems for themselves or correctional staff. Clemmer (1940) offers a parallel concept of “ungrouped” inmates – those who are “in the prison, but not of it” (p. 132) – who maintain ties to their family and friends in the free world, who, in turn, “[control the inmates’] prison behavior” from afar (p. 131).

Again, life is not lived in a vacuum, and although inmates are stripped of their personal identities upon admission to any total institution (Goffman, 1961), their internal cultural baggage is carried from cell to cell.

The Integrated Model. Hunt et al. (1993), in their study of ex-prisoners in California, found that neither the importation nor the deprivation models totally explained inmate behavior; instead, prisons exert an influence on the inmate and

his earlier street life, and vice versa. Much of the prison life “turmoil” revealed in their study was attributed to “other dynamics of prison life” (p. 398) that altered the existing prison culture, such as the formation of new gangs, “old school” inmates (who abide by the convict code, which will be discussed later) at a loss at how to handle the newer and younger inmates (referred to as the “Pepsi Generation,” or the “young shuck and jive energized generation,” according to respondents [p. 405]), and their immature impulsivity that “go[es] against the code” (p. 405), overcrowding, and the expectation to join a gang while in prison (at least for the California Hispanic inmates involved in the study).

Hochstetler and DeLisi (2005), in their review of the literature, found that some models combined both importation and deprivation to reveal an integrated approach to inmate misconduct that was dependent upon not only individual characteristics of the importation model, but also the structural and environmental characteristics inherent in the deprivation model.

The Lifestyle-Exposure Model. Hochstetler and DeLisi (2005) concluded that the model *du jour* was the integrated model, but admittedly that announcement seemed like a cop-out, a no-one-disagrees-and-no-one-gets-hurt approach to explaining inmate misconduct. Collecting survey data from 208 male parolees who had been released from prison six months prior to participating in the study and then residing in work-release facilities in a Midwestern state, they measured self-control, risk-taking, criminal attitudes, participation in the inmate economy (i.e., “loaning out goods for profit, contracting other prisoners to perform mundane services, and using drugs and alcohol” [p. 262]), offending behavior while incarcerated (i.e., engage in assaults, retaliation,

or weapons offenses), witness victimization, and perceived prison environment (i.e., focus on tolerance for the noise, boredom and lack of privacy while incarcerated). Hochstetler and DeLisi found that the “most powerful predictor of offending” was participation in the inmate economy (p. 264). They also examined the administrative control model (i.e., how a prison is managed is a key factor in whether or not offenders behave or misbehave, and this includes the amount of programming offered, “proactive staff interactions with inmates” [p. 258], effective and strong management/leadership, etc.), and the lifestyle-exposure model. This model is reminiscent of the “code of the street” and one’s ability to and propensity toward navigating that world criminally, where individuals believe they have the street credibility and knowledge to safely traverse such a landscape when others might not. A “crime-conducive identity” and “acting criminal” (Hochstetler & DeLisi, 2005, p. 259) in the free world transfer to the prison environment with greater ease. Their study revealed that the lifestyle-exposure model might produce a greater theoretical understanding of what individuals bring with them to prison and why they are more apt to engage in the forbidden “inmate economy,” an economy that mimics activity on the street. They concluded that these criminally-prone offenders fundamentally “did their time differently” (p. 265) than other inmates.

Prisonization: Prison and Prisoners’ Community¹⁵⁸

Ultimately, how does one peel away the layer of street code to expose the “decent” core and make responding in a decent manner automatic and reflexive?

¹⁵⁸ See Appendix B for an overview of the major prisonization and resocialization studies presented in this chapter.

How does one resocialize the street to decent, prison gang members to prisoners, and prisoners to citizens, once they have adapted to prison life?

Prisonization, the term introduced in Donald Clemmer's classic book, *The Prison Community* (1940), refers to the socialization and assimilation of inmates into the prison culture and prison community. The degree of prisonization is influenced by a variety of factors, including the length of time served in prison and exposure to prison life. In his descriptive case study of the culture of prison in the 1930s, Clemmer observed that the length of time an individual spent in prison affected the degree to which he succumbed to prisonization. If an offender is incarcerated for "many years" (p. 300), then the entire prison experience envelopes him and his personality, so that, upon release, "a happy adjustment in any community becomes next to impossible" (p. 300). Conversely, those inmates who spend only a short period of time in prison are not subject to a complete assimilation, and their readjustment to the free world upon release is presumably easier. Clemmer concluded that no prisoner was immune to this process, although some yield to it to a greater degree than others. According to Clemmer, the degree and "susceptibility" (p. 301) to prisonization depend upon the following:

- (1) The offender's personality;
- (2) The support systems he had prior to incarceration (i.e., family, friends, etc. who are still there for him while he is in prison);
- (3) His involvement in a "prison primary group" or "semi-primary group" (Clemmer points out the potential differences in speed of prisonization if two inmates, relatively similar in intelligence,

criminality, age and other demographic variables, are assigned to different work positions, one where the inmate interacts with only a handful of other offenders, and the other interacting with a hundred, for instance, on a work squad [p. 303]. Presumably the inmate who has contact with a greater number of offenders with various prison perspectives will surrender to the prison culture more quickly. However, Clemmer acknowledged that determining which offenders would be most susceptible to prisonization was a calculated gamble with no formula; instead, he provided specific case examples to support his belief.);

- (4) “Chance” and luck of the draw (i.e., who he gets as a cellmate and if that cellmate has not sipped the Kool-aid of prison culture, what work assignment he is given, etc.);
- (5) His “acceptance” of the prison code (p. 301) and his individual resolve and willpower not to buy into the prison culture; and
- (6) Various demographic variables, including age, race and criminal background that may predispose him to seek solace in the prison culture.

While Clemmer articulated that length of time served influenced the degree of prisonization and assimilation into the prison culture and community, Wheeler (1961), in his empirical test of the concept of prisonization, found that length of time served in prison *and* the amount of time left prior to release affected socialization. His findings revealed a “cyclical pattern of adjustment” (p. 708), where recidivists, or inmates returning to the system, had a period of

resocialization to prisonization; they were less likely to conform to staff role expectations when they reached six months to two years of confinement, and then increased their level of conformity when they neared parole or release.¹⁵⁹ He concluded that offenders may not be internalizing and “commit[ting] to a criminal value system” (p. 708) or criminal culture, but rather this depicts a “cycle with a negative trend” (p. 708), a non-intractable, roller coaster of a coping strategy.

Garabedian (1963), however, expanded upon Clemmer’s and Wheeler’s observations and argued that the degree of prisonization is not solely dependent on time served or time remaining, but rather “the *point of heaviest impact* varies with the different [inmate] role types” (p. 151).¹⁶⁰ He identified three inmate “career phases”: (1) “Early phase” indicated having served fewer than six months; (2) “middle phase” for having served more than six months with more than six months remaining; and (3) “end phase” with fewer than six months of incarceration left. Inmates were more likely to be prisonized once the initial “isolation” upon incarceration ended, and they were in the “middle phase” of

¹⁵⁹ Wheeler (1961) explained that recidivists “begin at a lower point [of prisonization] and end at a lower point, but the adaptive response pattern is still evident” (p. 707) and similar to what new inmates undergo upon admission.

¹⁶⁰ Garabedian (1963) identified five social roles inmates assume: (1) “square Johns” (not well-versed in the criminal lifestyle, often had minimal criminal involvement prior to incarceration, partake in prison programming, and “identify with conventional norms” [p. 143]); (2) “right guys” (more extensive juvenile and adult criminal histories, have minimal contact with prison staff, and are not engaged in prison programming); (3) “politicians” (more likely to have been involved in “relatively sophisticated crimes [that required] manipulating the victim by skill and wit” [p. 143], are involved in prison programming, and maintain contact with other inmates and correctional staff); (4) “outlaws” (tend to engage in more violent crimes, and maintain their distance from other inmates and staff); and (5) “dings” (the catch-all for inmates who, due to their “lack [of] consistency and reliability” [p. 144] in behavior, do not fit into the other categories).

confinement when their ties to the community and social support systems were more tenuous. Garabedian suggested that if

inmate solidarity is greatest during the middle period, then institutional treatment programs could perhaps be more strategically located during the pre-release phase of the career, thus increasing the likelihood of their effectiveness. Moreover, specific programs might be geared toward the treatment of certain role types (p. 152).

Group Formation: Primary Group and Peer Influence

Clemmer (1940) devised the concept of the “prison primary group” as the key ingredient in prisonization and defined it as

a collectivity of prisoners who possess a common body of knowledge and interest sufficient to produce an understanding and solidarity which is characterized by a we-feeling, sentimental attachment, and unanimity, and which allows, at the same time, elements of competition and resistance among members only to the extent that cohesion is not disrupted (p. 115).

He asserted that, for those identifying with such a group, this primary group was more influential on behavior in prison than the other forms of social control, such as the rules and regulations and efforts to reform individuals (p. 295). For the gang member already predisposed to becoming a part of a criminal group, might the process of prisonization be expedited and more intractable?

Based on a 1953-1954 Warden’s report, Sykes (1958) detailed the New Jersey State Prison’s stance on custody and supervision as being paramount to “rehabilitation,” and, more importantly, how the offender acclimates to the prison world:

The reality is simply this: The welfare of the individual inmate, to say nothing of his psychological freedom and dignity, does not importantly depend on how much education, recreation, and consultation he receives but rather depends on how he manages to live and relate with other inmates who constitute his crucial and only meaningful world (p. 36).

For prison gang members confined to administrative segregation, they receive none of the aforementioned “education, recreation or consultation,” or the opportunity to live among other inmates. It is only through the GRAD process that they are able to create a newer and more “meaningful world” among peers with similar backgrounds, values and beliefs, at least for the duration of the nine-month process.

Although many different primary groups exist in prison, Clemmer (1940) indicated they “lack[ed a] basic cohesion” and were not comprised of a great number of individuals (p. 129). He also discovered that the inmates who did form such groups were younger, had greater criminal involvement, and were more intelligent than those inmates who, for myriad reasons, remained less closely affiliated with other offenders. The “ungrouped” inmates, according to Clemmer, were those who successfully maintained attachments to their friends and family outside the prison walls: “Their non-penal primary group thus controls their prison behavior” (p. 131).

Inmate Frustration: Precursor to Prisonization?

The “pains of imprisonment,” as enumerated in Sykes’s *The Society of Captives* (1958), spur inmate frustration, which subsequently engenders the need to “escape” to survive prison life. The prisoners’ community then becomes one tool used to combat the psychological defeat of incarceration. Galtung (1958) focused on the prisoner’s retreat into and away from the community to deal with the frustration, as did McCorkle and Korn (1954) when examining the conflict between the inmate and administrative social systems and concluding that the physical can only be mitigated by “psychological withdrawal” (p. 89).

Galtung (1958) observed that the inmate *may revert to infantile behavior*, becoming overly dependent on prison staff; *may join the prison community* (with the “prison becom[ing] his world” [p. 132]); or *may join the prisoners’ community* “with its peculiar subculture [designed to] protect him against all the frustrations” (p. 132). The decision to join the prisoners’ community allows the inmate to “[regain] his lost belongingness to a primary group if he had one; or he experiences it...almost for the first time in his life” (Galtung, 1958, p. 132). Either way, the prisoners’ community offers the inmate what the gang offers. The community members help the offender subscribe to the belief that he is neither to blame nor to be held accountable for his incarceration. The prisoners’ community advocates that prisoners were wronged and subsequently railroaded by the courts and law enforcement.

The inmate, however, may retreat from the prisoners’ community and “*escape into isolation* [italics added]” (Galtung, 1958, p. 133); or he *may choose to immerse himself in his legal case* to prove he was wronged (p. 134). He may also “*escape into expiation* [italics added]” (p. 134) to atone and make amends for his guilty act and fulfill one of the original goals of prison when penitence was mandated. Galtung (1958) suggests that this offers the inmate a “moral balance” (p. 134) so when he is finally released from prison, he can convince himself that he has indeed paid for his crime by serving his sentence faithfully. Or, to challenge the monotony of prison life, the offender *may decide to violate every prison rule*. Finally, he *may descend “into illness* [italics added]” (Galtung, 1958, p. 134), whether it is self-abuse, suicide attempts, or real or imagined illness.

Galtung (1958) contends that all of the aforementioned responses are “dysfunctional or at best nonfunctional” (p. 138) to successful resocialization in prison, but admits that an “escape into the prison community, under special conditions” (p. 138) may not interfere with resocialization; however, he did not elaborate on what these “special conditions” were. If inmates join the prisoners’ community and associate with a primary group of offenders committed to gang life, then are the attempts at resocializing prison gang members inside the prison walls an exercise in futility?

The Dissenting Opinion: No Hostile Takeover by Prison Culture

Unlike Sykes’s (1958) and Clemmer’s (1940) assertions that prison, or any total institution, presents its own distinct culture in addition to the internalized culture with which each individual arrives, Goffman (1961) does not endorse this view: “Now it appears that total institutions do not substitute their own unique culture for something already formed” (p. 13). Goffman acknowledges the possibility for “cultural change,” conceding that “if [it] does occur” (p. 13), it happens only because “certain behavior opportunities” (p. 13) are no longer available. The absence of opportunities forces behavioral compliance, but it might not be sufficient to effect fundamental internal changes in values.

Convict Code: The Rule Book for Prison Life¹⁶¹

Prison is an “alternative universe where all the rules and social interactions have been turned upside down (for instance, kindness is seen as

¹⁶¹ Although the convict code may also be referred to as the “inmate code,” Koehler (2000) differentiates between an inmate and a convict: “An inmate is a prisoner who often violates the prison culture’s code of conduct” (p. 159), and convicts “strongly abide by this code” (p. 159).

weakness)” (Gould, 2003, p. 1-25), and prison life deemed “unpredictable” (Western, in the introduction to Sykes’s *The Society of Captives*, [Princeton Classic Edition published in 2007], 1958, p. xi), despite the predictability of routine. To counter the unpredictability inherent in the inevitable clashes of so many varied personalities in such small spaces, prison life, like street life as Anderson (1994; 1999) explained, is structured around its own code, the convict code. Just as the code of the street is a response to the perils of inner-city violence, the convict code is “an understandable response to the rigors of confinement” (Sykes, 1958, p. 143).¹⁶²

Comprised of “elaborate *informal* rules and norms” (Haney, 2006, p. 178) and unwritten mores that guide the inmate to conform to and organize prison life (Clemmer, 1940; Haney, 2006), the convict code establishes an informal order among the individual inmate personalities and allows them to police themselves. Clemmer (1940) describes the code as the “social control” in prison (p. 157), or the mechanism through which all continues to function according to plan and “force[s] the continuance of the established way of doing things” (p. 150). It makes a heterogeneous population more homogeneous in its goals. Clemmer concedes that although this code is an unwritten, ethereal concept floating from prison to prison, decade after decade, it seems to be common, pre-existing knowledge to every individual entering prison, as if shared and perpetuated through osmosis, throughout generations and through prison walls. Offenders

¹⁶² This quote was from the epilogue of Sykes’s *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison* (1958), Princeton University Press, and reprinted in 2007. The epilogue was reprinted from *Punishment and Social Control*, 2d ed., (2003), Blomberg and Cohen [Eds.], Walter de Gruyter, Inc., Hawthorne, NY, pp. 357-365.

may not know what to expect when they first arrive at prison, but they already seem to know the tenets of the code and the repercussions for violations. Without it, prison life would be “more woefully disorganized than it is, [...and] we would find open conflict at all times..., and a community befuddled with its own uncertainties” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 153). The code serves a similar purpose as do prison gang constitutions: providing order, outlining expectations, and enumerating consequences for disobedience.

However, not all inmates abide by the code or show it the respect one expects of a time-honored tradition. Hunt et al. (1993) explained that the introduction of newer and younger inmates forced a change in prison life, rendering it more violent. Youth generates “increasing uncertainty and unpredictability” (p. 406) for the older inmates who have abided by this entrenched code.

The Core Tenets of the Convict Code

Although not exhaustive, the following list provides the reader with several tenets of this “norm system” (Galtung, 1958, p. 133):

Each inmate does his own time. The code admonishes inmates to refrain from being nosy or meddling in the daily lives and drama of other offenders. However, as previously mentioned, those offenders repeatedly physically tested or targeted for recruitment by prison gangs might conclude that serving a solitary sentence is not the surest path to survival. Although the convict code espouses independence and “doing your own time,” the reality of remaining independent and running solo can be a difficult proposition.

A moral hierarchy exists, even among outlaws. Child molesters and rapists, due to the nature of the offense and choice of victim, occupy the bottom rungs. Offenders who “have raped little girls are universally viewed with disgust, while men who have raped adult females are tolerated” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 254). For the inmate, the code legislates decency and morality.

Do not assist or agree with prison staff or appear sympathetic to their plight. The code stipulates disdain and mistrust for prison officials (Clemmer, 1940; Galtung, 1958). Although, according to Clemmer, individual inmates may not have the evidence to support such claims that prison officials are corrupt, once one story – fact or fiction – is shared about an officer or guard who wronged another, that story becomes the message passed from inmate to inmate, with gossip and hearsay its main modes of dissemination. Clemmer labels such phenomena as “dogma,” that is, “hazy, indefinite opinions [that become] attitudes” (p. 172), despite a lack of evidence or corroboration. Inmates must also refrain from assisting prison officials, especially if that assistance would harm or lead to discipline taken against another offender, thus violating the sense of loyalty among inmates (Clemmer, 1940).

Do not steal from other inmates. The need for respect, as mentioned earlier, is more than a need; to the gang member, it is sustenance and motivation. Any affront, no matter how slight, is interpreted as disrespect. If an inmate steals a personal belonging from an STG member, the subsequent physical assault is not because of the theft, but rather the disrespect the offender showed toward the gang member.

Stick with one's own race and religion. A Jewish inmate in a western state prison explains, for example, how the code handles dining in the chow hall among offenders of different races and religions:

It is an inviolate rule that different races may not break bread together under any circumstances....If you eat at the same table as another race, you'll get beaten down. If you eat from the same tray as another race, you'll be put in the hospital. And if you eat from the same food item as another race, that is, after another race has already taken a bite of it, you can get killed (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009).

No snitching. As explained in Chapter 1, silence was central to the maintenance of order in prison during its inception in the 19th century. Silence was indeed golden – and in prison and among inmates, a violation of this golden rule of “no snitching” can result in bloodshed or death. Talking or tattling, as addressed in the code of the street, is simply not condoned.¹⁶³ However, one caveat to the no-snitching rule does exist – the fear of federal charges, according to a Hazleton, Pennsylvania, police detective, who adds that the desire and willingness to talk to law enforcement is “no longer ‘snitching’ in their mind....It’s helping themselves out” (Griffith, 2008, p. 53). Snitching is a perverse method of self-preservation; one does not snitch if the prison time is viewed as bearable, yet one can opt out of the no-snitch clause if the threat of serving day-for-day federal prison time is imminent. One inmate in Clemmer’s study (1940) conceded that “the stool-pigeon [snitch] system is necessary in prisons UNLESS some way is found to replace brawn with brains in prison employees. Even if that could be done[,] the rats would still be in prisons, informing on their fellow

¹⁶³ Even White supremacist groups have transformed the policy into a creed known as the “Five Words” (“I have nothing to say”), the standard response when questioned by law enforcement (Anti-Defamation League, “Hate on display”).

men” (p. 163). This inmate advised that “self-interest” was the primary motive for snitching, and further noted that “[even] the officials who realize the necessity of using them despise them” (p. 163). Prison staff also buy into the code and view snitches similarly.

Might is right. The convict code espouses that “might is right,” and only the physically and mentally strong survive. Renaud (2002) characterized this as “one of the ugliest things about prison” (p. 62), adding that offenders “will take advantage of the weak and will turn eyes away from those being taken advantage of, believing that intervention will bring retaliation” (p. 62). Western, in his introduction to Sykes’s *The Society of Captives* (Princeton Classic Edition published in 2007) (1958), further notes that “those who trade in violence retain a little masculinity...in a society of strict control” (p. xii). Incarceration deals in hyper-vigilance, as

the inmate is acutely aware that sooner or later he will be “tested” – that someone will “push” him to see how far they can go and that he must be prepared to fight for the safety of his person and his possessions....And yet if he succeeds [in defending himself physically], he may well become a target for the prisoner who wishes to prove himself, who seeks to enhance his own prestige by defeating the man with a reputation for toughness (Sykes, 1958, pp. 77-78).

Retaliation to maintain one’s honor may manifest itself in numerous ways, some legal (such as working harder and having tunnel-vision to succeed at that which others intimated was impossible) and some not. To those who use the physical disrespect as the catalyst for success, the gangster way may seem like perverse justice where every slight and subsequent retaliatory action can be justified and repackaged as “self-defense.”

Being nice always has an ulterior motive. Blind trust among inmates is reserved for only the most naïve, but an offender's knack for gauging another inmate's ability to detect fact from fiction is a precious commodity. McCorkle and Korn (1954) cite this "possession [of coercive power] as the highest personal value" (p. 90) within prison. For example, if one inmate offers any item to another, or purchases a snack from the commissary to be shared, both of which are kind gestures in a mainstream and law-abiding society, these are manipulative acts within the inmate system that say, "Now I own you."

Fear no one and show no fear. Geoffrey Canada, in his memoir, *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence* (1995), recounts a story as a four-year-old in the Bronx, watching his older brothers return to a park at the behest of their mother to retrieve his brother's jacket taken by another child.

My mother gave [my oldest brother] her ultimatum. "You go out there and get your brother's jacket or when you get back I'm going to give you a beating that will be ten times as bad as what that little thief could do to you..." (p. 5).

When the brothers returned with the jacket, Canada's mother "gathered us all together and told us we had to stick together. That we couldn't let people think we were afraid...that she would not tolerate our becoming victims" (p. 5). Whether it is the street code in the Bronx or the convict code in any jail or prison, the lesson to be learned is simple: Being victimized or taken advantage of is reputation suicide.

The average law-abiding citizen not exposed to prison life, other than what he or she sees on the news or in a B-movie aired in the wee hours of the night, may find this reality foreign. It is almost laughable to expect someone who can

shank without remorse to pepper his conversation with simple pleasantries and say “please” and “thank you,” to bring him into this world when he exists in another. This is not done where he lives, and so it will not be done now. His reality becomes daily survival, which begs the question: Is survival morally wrong? Strict adherence to the code can increase the odds of survival, and in the prison setting, for many offenders, the ends justify the means.

Administrative Culture: Dances with Inmates

“The prison official is a bureaucrat, but he is a bureaucrat with a gun.”
—Gresham Sykes, *The Society of Captives*, 1958, p. xxxiii

Prison administration tacitly accepts the inmate code and the “inmate power structure” (McCorkle & Korn, 1954, p. 91) derived from it as another form of social control (Clemmer, 1940; McCorkle & Korn, 1954; Sykes, 1958). To a certain extent, it depends on offenders to self-govern and keep one another in check. Prison gangs already provide this structure for their members with the rituals performed and pledges taken, the violations and punishment meted out, and the hierarchical leadership with shot callers controlling the soldiers, even to the point where prison gangs can control what happens on the street. For example, the California Mexican Mafia “consolidat[ed] control over Latino street gangs in Los Angeles by enforcing a cease-fire” on drive-by shootings conducted by local street gangs (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Transcript”). The prison gangs covet a certain power that prison officials have to acknowledge, short of administration reverting back to its dependence on building tenders and peacekeepers to quell riots and violence through brute force and carnage. McCorkle and Korn (1954) argue that administration’s refusal to challenge the “inmate power structure” allows the “institution [to buy] peace with

the system by avoiding battle with it” (p. 91). Increasing the resocialization odds in prison may hinge on this interdependent partnership and how prison staff, from administration to security staff to the education and mental health professionals, cultivate a more functional institutional culture.

The National Institute of Corrections has implemented its “Institutional Culture Initiative” to train staff and transform the culture of individual institutions (Morial, 2006). As Marc Morial, who served on the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, summarized from the Commission’s 2006 report, *Confronting Confinement*, “[W]hen one changes the culture[,] one changes the entire institution” (Morial, 2006). James Byrne, Criminal Justice professor at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, clarified in his testimony before the Commission that a relationship not defined as “power and control” is pivotal in the transformation of staff-inmate interactions (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, 2006, “Addressing violence,” p. 71). To decrease the social distance between inmate and prison staff (whether it is an officer, counselor, or medical staff), relationships between the two must be developed to provide the inmate with the support he would otherwise get from the gang (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, 2006, “Addressing violence,” p. 104). The discussion next addresses these relationships and their potential impact on promoting internal change.

Correctional Officers versus Inmates

The convict code is sustained by a “winked-at agreement between officers and inmates” (Renaud, 2002, p. 63) that directs the interplay between the two groups and their perceptions of one another. Sykes (1958) earlier noted that the

officer “frequently show[ed] evidence of having been ‘corrupted’ by the captive criminals over whom he stands” (p. 54), as the officer is the one primarily responsible for implementing the prison’s vision for order. Gangsters, as do other inmates, influence prison policies, and prison policies influence gangsters. Prisoners and correctional staff maintain a ““symbiotic relationship”” (Moore, 1978, cited by Hunt et al., 1993, p. 400; see also Clemmer, 1940,¹⁶⁴ and Goffman, 1961) between the watched and the watchers (Goffman, 1961), where they need each other *because* of each other. Revisiting the notion that the prison system, at least according to one Texas warden, “sometimes...create[s] the monster” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007) with policy, the correctional officer becomes the one “caught up in a vicious circle where he must suppress the very activity that he helps cause” (Sykes, 1958, p. 22).

Galtung (1958) identified two types of relationships correctional officers have with prisoners: primary and secondary. *Secondary relationships* do not evolve beyond the officer doing his or her job as dictated by the prison; punishment and sanctions are doled out to maintain order. Those guards who distance themselves from this type of relationship “bec[o]me deviants from their prescribed role” (Galtung, 1958, p. 136); that is, they “[permit] their own judgment to enter and form a particularistic orientation to the prisoner, without asking for consensus” (p. 136) from colleagues and view prisoners as human and not an identification number. Those officers who violate their profession’s norms of conduct and pursue this *primary relationship* run the “risk of receiving negative

¹⁶⁴ Clemmer defined symbiosis as “living together so that a benefit exists which is mutual for the parties involved” (p. 297).

sanctions from guards and officials higher up in the prison hierarchy” (Galtung, 1958, p. 137). They either conform to the expected norms and values of the guard culture, or chance being ostracized by their coworkers who embrace the rigidity of the job. “Positive sanctions” (Galtung, 1958, p. 137) and other positive comments that are an integral part of any relationship, especially a primary one, are not permitted in the prison world. The officer, therefore, is “caught in a conflict of loyalties” (Sykes, 1958, p. 55), yet “in the inmates he finds willing sympathizers: They too claim to suffer from the unreasonable irritants of power” (p. 55).

According to Sykes (1958), guards are dependent on the inmates for how the cellblock “reflects on [his] ability to ‘handle’ prisoners” (p. 56). Offenders constantly locked down or receiving disciplinaries for every infraction might convey to administration that these officers are unable to do their jobs well, control the inmate population, or enforce compliance. The guard “often discovers that his best path of action is to make ‘deals’ or ‘trades’ with the captives in his power” (Sykes, 1958, pp. 56-57).

McCorkle and Korn (1954) also reference the conflict between the inmate and prison system through sheer “exploit[ation of] the custodian’s psychological as well as his physical vulnerability” (p. 93). Offenders become skilled at “reduc[ing]...the social distance [between inmate and officer], outflanking it with a personal relationship, and exploiting that relationship for the inmates’ own purposes” (p. 93). Once this is done, offenders expect “reciprocity” (p. 93), whereby if they do a “favor” for an officer (maybe the inmates calculatingly quash the potential for a fight), then it is expected that this favor, no matter how small or

trivial, be returned as a gesture of good will (even if there is no underlying reason of goodness). The threat of being compromised appears to be greater for the officer because he or she is reacting to an offender's behavior, and the offender can easily explain away to the group his "niceness" as a test to assess the officer's willingness to blur the line between "us and them."

The pervasive threat of riots and chaos looms in the correctional officer's mind. Each officer must replenish his "fund of good will" (Sykes, 1958, p. 57) toward the offenders. During a hostage situation or riot is not the time for an officer to begin his goodwill ambassadorship. Poetic justice is not just a wish of the scorned. Sykes considers this staff-needs-inmate-more-than-inmate-needs-staff philosophy as another barrier to the officer as total enforcer. The guard may overlook certain violations, as he anticipates using these as currency should he become dependent upon the kindness of an offender during a physical assault or riot. The officers have to relinquish some rigidity if they are to expect the inmates to comply "in the 'major' areas of the custodial regime" (Sykes, 1958, p. 58). These illustrate the "structural defects in the prison's system of power" (Sykes, 1958, p. 61).¹⁶⁵

"Culture Clash" of the Titans

It is not only the roles of inmate and correctional officer that influence their relationship, but also the cultural diversity inherent in any heterogeneous

¹⁶⁵ Sykes comments that the "defects of total power" do not stem from "individual inadequacies" (p. 61) of correctional staff, but rather from the "'built-in' weaknesses of the prison as a social system" (p. 61), including the "lack of a sense of duty" among inmates, the "fallacies of coercion" to maintain order, the minimal "rewards and punishments to induce compliance," the "strong pressures toward the corruption of" correctional officers, and the power given to "trusted inmates" in terms of coveted duties and jobs within the prison (p. 61).

population. Gould (2003) identifies the race and culture clash between correctional officers and offenders, explaining that officers “often are of the majority culture and may not be sensitive to or aware of the cultural diversity issues of the inmate population. There may be cultural clashes between the correctional officers and inmate populations” (p. 1-8). Davis and Flannery (2001) also warn against ignoring differences in the race and ethnicity of not only gang members, but also correctional staff responsible for supervising them. Using Goldstein and Soriano’s “model for culturally sensitive programming” (p. 39), Davis and Flannery (2001) suggest employing staff whose culture reflects that of the offenders they monitor and who are versed in racial and ethnic differences. Because a program like TDCJ’s GRAD process is an option only for prison gang members who are housed in Ad Seg (which means that Bloods and Crips, the only two identified Texas prison gangs that are primarily African-American and are not placed in segregation based solely on gang status, are not heavily represented in the GRAD process),¹⁶⁶ GRAD offenders are overwhelmingly Hispanic and White.¹⁶⁷ The groups in GRAD, therefore, lack the ethnic and racial

¹⁶⁶ Although TDCJ has identified and classified 12 gangs as Security Threat Groups, only validated members from nine of these are placed in Ad Seg based on confirmed STG status alone. (Bloods, Crips and Texas Chicano Brotherhood members are excluded.) According to the Security Threat Group Management Office, only those members affiliated with an STG that originated in the prison setting are truly “prison gangs” – and not street gang imports – and, therefore, are relegated to Ad Seg (P.F., personal communication, April 5, 2005). Bloods and Crips originated on the West Coast in Los Angeles, and the Texas Chicano Brotherhood transformed itself from the Tri-City Bombers street gang that originally formed in the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo area of Texas. Members of other street gangs and “cliques” are monitored for association while in TDCJ, but they are not placed in segregation unless their behavior in prison warrants isolation. According to one TDCJ representative, approximately five Bloods and Crips who were placed in Ad Seg based on STG status had participated in and completed the GRAD process, as of early 2011 (P.F., personal communication, May 18, 2011).

¹⁶⁷ On August 31, 2010, TDCJ reported its total prison population, including both male and female offenders, was 36.2% African-American, 31% White, 32.3% Hispanic and .5% listed as “Other” (TDCJ, 2011, “Statistical report fiscal year 2010,” p. 8).

diversity the soon-to-be-former gang members will encounter upon their return to the general prison population.

Correctional Officers versus Helping Professionals

The conflict between rehabilitation and incarceration (or “coddle” versus control) is easily transformed into a professional conflict between the therapeutic tenets of social work and the social control of prison. Correctional officers may shudder at accusations of being labeled as “social workers” rather than criminal justice professionals. To expect rehabilitation over imprisonment and control is to be viewed as a traitor. It is here that the flexibility of social work and the rigidity of corrections collide; however, the outcome does not have to be adversarial.

Based on observations at New Jersey State Prison, McCorkle and Korn (1954) approached the question of inmate resocialization by examining the “custodian” versus “therapist” angle – each defeats the other, but must work together to appreciate their points of view in dealing with inmates within the inmate social system, or else treatment will not be effective: “The custodian’s definition of the therapist as an enemy of discipline and the therapist’s conception of the custodian as an obstructor of treatment must be replaced by new definitions...” (p. 98). Are the “friend[s] and helpers[s] of the inmate” (p. 97) more susceptible than security staff to being manipulated by offenders who subscribe to the inmate culture’s tenet that “automatically [redefine]...[them] to be exploited as a champion of inmates in their grievances against society in general and the custodian in particular” (p. 97)? McHugh (1966) argued that in order for treatment in the carceral setting to be “successful,” therapists must have the

“cooperation” (p. 357) of the inmates, but because inmates view the “authority of the therapist [as] illegitimate” (p. 357) – neither reasonable nor justifiable – they confer neither status nor respect on the helpers.

It is these opposing mandates of the criminal justice system and incarceration (as discussed in Chapter 1) that drive a wedge into the entire operation. Gould (2003), citing B.K. Schwartz,¹⁶⁸ tallies the “differences between mental health training and correctional psychology demands” (p. 1-23):

Mental Health	Correctional Psychology
“See patient as suffering from an illness, not responsible for behavior”	“See inmate as responsible for behavior”
“Support person’s strengths”	“Confront maladaptive behavior”
“Trusts patient, believes patient”	“Does not trust inmate, expects inmate to lie, minimize, and justify (use Thinking Errors)”
“Patient welfare is first concern”	“Public safety is first concern”
“Patient is accountable to self”	“Inmate is accountable to society”

These different orientations become the lens through which the facts about the inmate’s reality are presented to him. McCorkle and Korn (1954) also attribute the failure of the idea of rehabilitation not to treatment or rehabilitation itself, but rather to the mental health professionals’ self-perception as “rescuers and helpers rather than the rehabilitators of convicts” (p. 95). They argue that the “helpers” led to the demise of their own therapeutic reputation and legitimacy by being “exploit[ed] by the inmate social system and collaborat[ing] in their own neutralization” (p. 95). Falling prey to inmates’ smoke screen tales of woe – true or not, contrived or real – “neutralizes” the professional’s efforts at rehabilitation by “eating up [the professional’s] time and misdirecting his efforts away from the

¹⁶⁸ Adapted from Schwartz’s “Differences in Treating Sex Offenders,” a paper (1999) presented at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Training in Torrington, Connecticut.

proper target, the system itself” (p. 96). The inmate acculturated into the prison community will always find another target to deflect blame and “turn [hostility and hatred of himself] back upon society, using the misery of prison life as his reasonable pretext” (p. 95).

Culture of Individual Facilities: If You Build It, They Will Come, But How Will They Leave?

When Clemmer introduced the concept of prisonization in *The Prison Community* in 1940, it was assumed that most prison facilities were similar, at least in physical design. But arguably each prison unit in today’s world has its own organizational culture in addition to the inmate culture, which Wheeler (1961) stated also influenced the socialization process.

The blueprint of a unit – its physical design, custody and security levels, and inmate demographics, for instance – affects all prisoners and impacts the activity level of gangs. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, dorm-style housing, built quickly to accommodate the burgeoning Texas prison population in the 1990s, is more vulnerable to gang recruitment and gang meetings (W.G., personal communication, January 19, 2007) where inmates cannot be as closely monitored by outnumbered officers as can those offenders housed in cells. Physically containing bodies is more problematic in a dorm setting, and it is “virtually impossible to quell [violent] activity” (Bernstein & Garvey, 2006), according to Kansas City (Missouri) jail consultant Nancy Insko, who weighed in on the 2006 interracial violence in the Los Angeles County jail system. The “high numbers [of inmates] and scant [officer] supervision” were the main ingredients that “made the dorms cauldrons of pent-up emotions among the inmates and

allowed them to create their own subculture in which deputies do not interfere” (Bernstein & Garvey, 2006).

On one minimum security prison unit in East Texas housing older inmates (an average age of 40 years, according to its warden), the atmosphere itself is not favorable to gang activity because

everyone minds their own business....There's not that sense that when you walk in the door, someone jams you up and says, “What you gonna do or else?” So there's no need. You can be your own individual and not have to sweat it (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

However, on maximum security units where inmates, typically younger, may be more prone to having disciplinary problems, that environment increases the level of gang activity (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). Each facility has its own culture and concomitant management issues – units with younger and more inmates are more susceptible to violence, violence demands punishment and consequences (which may include seeking protection by joining a gang), punishment may lead to segregation, segregation exacerbates psychological ills, and an offender’s return to a rehabilitated state may be beyond reach.

The Way of the Warden

“[T]he maximum security prison, like every organization, bears the mark of the particular men in power.”

–Gresham Sykes, *The Society of Captives*, 1958, p. 36

Because the field of corrections is not yet “professionalized” and lacks “[shared] professional ethics or values...[and]...a common accumulation of knowledge” (Schwartz, 2003, p. P1-1), prison systems throughout the U.S. are not managed uniformly (Schwartz, 2003). Individual prison units, in turn, reflect

the leadership and temperament of their wardens. Renaud (2002) candidly states that in Texas “every unit has its own policy [about punishment and discipline], set out by the warden, as to what is considered serious and to be strictly [enforced] and what is trivial and thus to be ignored or tolerated” (p. 106). He cites an example of “fighting [to be] expected” on facilities with younger offenders, adding that this is “sometimes even encouraged by lower-ranking officers as a way of releasing tension” (p. 106), while other wardens may view such mutual combat as a precursor to retaliation (p. 106). Because no management standard exists, what effect might administration’s orientation toward inmate control and rehabilitation have on the self-perception of a prison gang member who has decided to disassociate from the gang and participate in a renunciation program?

Schwartz (2003) acknowledges that rehabilitation programs often are at the mercy of any given warden or administrator. Along these lines, the successful “repair” of prison gang members may be influenced by the era of correctional thought and standard practice that molded prison staff. A warden who identifies more strongly with the retributive purpose of incarceration (with less of an affinity for the “coddling” of inmates through rehabilitation) and the once-a-thug-always-a-thug belief may signal that any positive behavioral change or professed disassociation from the gang reeks of manipulation and dishonesty. Resistance to change in modifying not only prison gang policy but also perceptions of individual behavior and rehabilitation is a product of the fear of the unknown and the fear of failure – failure that, at least within the prison system, can have dire consequences for both offender and staff.

Culture Conflict: The Intersection of the Codes of the Street, Gang and Prison

Having examined the various cultures affecting offenders, both gang-involved and general, who arrive at the prison gates with cultural baggage in tow, the discussion now turns to reconciling these values, beliefs and norms.

"Biculturalism": Buying into a Culture, But Which One?

Today many gang members live in two worlds and often without stable footing in either. Sheldon et al. (1997) state that many are not "socially embedded" (p. 37) in the dominant culture and values; mainstream society has a tenuous hold on them. But McEvoy et al. (1997) contend that most are "still healthily connected to the larger culture in many ways" (p. 15). Similarly, in their study of gang members in a Mexican-American community, Horowitz and Schwartz (1974) found that members strive to find the "balance between...commitment to conventional as opposed to street values" (p. 247). Because they are not criminal 24 hours a day, many do not adhere solely to the codes; however, this may depend upon the situation and the orientation of the family.

In Anderson's observations of the code of the streets in inner-city Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he distinguishes between "decent" and "street" families. He characterizes "decent families [as those who] tend to accept mainstream values more fully and attempt to instill them in their children" (1994, p. 3), while "street families...are more fully invested in the code of the street than the decent people are, [and] may aggressively socialize their children into it in a normative way. They more fully believe in the code and judge themselves and

others according to its values” (1999, p. 45). A child reared by a “street” parent might have insight into the morality of the broader culture, but may rationalize his or her criminal behavior as necessary for survival. Hagedorn (1988), in his study of Milwaukee gangs, illustrates this in the following interview:

Q. Do you think stealing is wrong?

A. Yeah, you know something, I feel that stealing is wrong, but you know, stealing to try to either help yourself or your parents or something is OK....If you taking something from the rich and giving it to the poor, then you know you're doing a good deed. But you're still doing something wrong (p. 101).

A study at Columbia University's Center for Violence Research and Prevention found that “identities and normative behavioral codes were situation-specific” (National Institute of Justice, 1998, p. 2), with juveniles “alternat[ing] their demeanor between ‘decent’ and ‘street’ codes of behavior, language and dress. Both orientations lived side by side within the same individuals” (p. 2). An African-American gang member interviewed for Vigil's (2002) ethnographic study comparing cross-cultural differences among gangs simply stated: “You’ve got to realize, I keep my lives separate” (p. 91). He was able to obey parental rules and not “[mess] up in [his] parents’ home” (p. 91), but outside of that protected environment, he engaged in a different lifestyle with very different norms and values. He later told his counselor: “I live two lives. The drugs and gang is one life. The other life is with my family” (p. 94). This dualism allows individuals to respond to whatever might greet them as they walk down the street. Someone says unkind words about your mother? The code dictates a response. Someone challenges you for being in an unwelcome neighborhood? The code mandates a “‘decent’ youth to situationally adopt a tough demeanor and perhaps behave

violently in order to navigate through an otherwise hostile and possibly dangerous environment” (National Institute of Justice, 1998, p. 2). A dual personality is the key to survival. Although the literature points to the near impossibility of earning respect through retreat, researchers involved with this study observed that those with “verbal skills and mental agility” (National Institute of Justice, 1998, p. 2) were able to walk away while “simultaneously pay[ing] respect to the other party and maintain[ing] their own status” (National Institute of Justice, 1998, p. 2).

But what about those individuals who *are* able to geographically remove themselves from the street? For those who do cross the line and gain legitimate and legal employment in mainstream society, they “have not just an invitation but an obligation to return” (ESPN Outside the Lines, 1997), according to Sanyika Shakur (aka “Monster” Kody Scott), former Los Angeles Crip member. While addressing the infiltration of gang members and associates into professional sports franchises, he further states that the “successful” gang member has

double indemnity [because] you have a cultural obligation and you have the 'hood obligation....If you don't come back and help to contribute, you get your ghetto pass revoked. Then you have a responsibility for the 'hood thing, which can get you murdered if you don't come back (ESPN Outside the Lines, 1997).

Dual citizenship has just become more problematic. Choosing criminal activities and adhering to the code of the streets fulfilled these “individual needs.” They snubbed societal approval, whether by choice, lack of opportunity, or socialization, in exchange for the perceived power and status acquired by living an “indecent” life.

Affiliation with a peer group, whether in the street or a custodial setting, “requires one to open oneself up to the pressure and social influence imposed by it” (Newman & Newman, 1991, p. 401). If this can be accomplished in a negative atmosphere, if individuals can adopt a negative group identity, can they just as easily be drawn to a positive group identity? Can they choose “decency” over the street? In an attempt to alter prison gang members’ reference group and code of conduct, TDCJ has created the GRAD process, which operates under the assumption that new reference groups with appropriate norms can be created and instilled in gang members who remain incarcerated and, perhaps, embedded in the prison culture. Personal values may conflict with those of the prison culture, and the inmate’s response to certain prison behavior that is part of the prison culture further increases the social distance between an inmate and his peers (Clemmer, 1940, p. 109). Clemmer observed how some inmates teetered and straddled the fence in both worlds – without becoming fully “acculturized to either” (p. 110). He pointed out that individuals who had become “assimilated” (p. 110) viewed the behavior of these bicultural inmates as “confused and illogical” (p. 110), quoting one inmate, ““You can’t be both ways”” (p. 110). Is life in prison easier and more manageable for those who choose to become fully assimilated? And if they previously were able to fully assimilate into a gang culture, then prison culture, and then prison gang culture (although not necessarily in that order or that neatly), does this susceptibility to and ease of assimilation increase their propensity for assimilation into *any* group, even a prosocial group, such as the one the GRAD process offers?

However, for individuals who maintain strong identities with gangs, violence and intimidation pave the road to respect. Physical strength is valued, and any sign of weakness, a punishable offense. Many have been socialized not to share emotions, especially if those emotions are anything other than anger. They are more comfortable becoming physically violent when they can define the rules and control the outcome; a group with supportive peers is not easily reconciled with the image they strive to protect. The GRAD process, though, uses peer pressure and modeling behavior to help offenders understand the “value of collective enterprise” (Newman & Newman, 1991, p. 401). With this, the Texas prison system hopes to mold the group to influence behaviors consistent with the values and norms of the greater society, but first they have to overcome the lure of the values and norms of prison. But are they strong enough to maintain an identity with their GRAD group and the lessons learned once they exit GRAD and return to the general prison population? Or is it merely pounding into them surface manners without challenging or changing their belief system or that of the environment in which they live – prison? The success of GRAD hinges on its ability to instill new values and codes of conduct in prison gang members; in essence, to invite them into the approved dominant culture of mainstream society that conflicts with their street and prison cultures. Tannenbaum, in *Crime and the Community* (1938), elaborated on such an approach to supplant a “socially disapproved” culture with the dominant culture:

In theory isolation from that group ought to provide occasion for change in the individual’s habit structure. It might, if the individual were transplanted to a group whose values and activities had the approval of the wider community, and in which the newcomer might hope to gain full acceptance eventually. But until now isolation has meant the grouping in close

confinement of persons whose strongest common bond has been their socially disapproved delinquent conduct (p. 21).

Culture Conflict: Internal Battle of the Criminal Brawn

The range of cultures and their codes presented throughout this chapter – gang, street, prison and prison gang – clearly pose problems when pitted against one another and defy the goals of prison administration. The question remains: How does one reconcile these different cultures so the system can even begin to resocialize prison gang members? It is believed that one of TDCJ's goals is to safely remove them from administrative segregation and prepare them for a return to the general population where they can serve the remainder of their sentences, taking advantage of prison programming as they await their eventual release to the free world. Is *instilling values of mainstream society* an implied secondary goal and the barometer used to measure their readiness to join fellow population inmates or be released to the free world?

Although culture conflict theory was originally used to explain higher crime rates among immigrants (Sellin, 1938), the concept may be used to explain the behavior of those forced to negotiate opposing cultures – in this case, gang-affiliated individuals who abide by the codes of the street and prison, and programs like GRAD that embrace the values and norms of the dominant culture (which include both prison and the free world). Just as the “culture patterns and norms” (Sellin, 1938, p. 86) of various immigrant groups clashed with those of the greater American culture, so do the norms of the street and convict codes, and the rules enumerated in prison gang constitutions when paired with a renunciation program inside prison walls.

As Anderson (1994; 1999) has shown, decent and street youth are able to live in more than one world, each with different and competing values, norms and beliefs. Street socialization “molds the youth to conform to the ways of the street” (Vigil, 2002, p. 10). To prevent violence and victimization, “decent” people adopt a street sensibility to safely navigate the street itself; “they must adapt to a street reality that is often dominated by people who at best are suffering severely in some way and who are apt to resort quickly to violence to settle disputes” (Anderson, 1999, p. 50). Similarly, “decent” families teach their children how to be “street-oriented” when a situation requires it, yet they also know how to slip back into a decent life once the threat of potential violence has passed. But how successful is the street family at crossing over to the “decent” life of the dominant culture and remaining there?

Implicit in culture conflict theory is the premise that when people in one cultural group “migrate” to another group, their conduct norms cannot be separated from them (Cressey, 1968; Sellin, 1938). For individuals raised on the code of the street, living by the convict code, and entrenched in the prison gang life but sanctioned to renunciation, it becomes clear that the various cultures are at odds. Committed to the GRAD process for nine months (excluding the preliminary Disassociation Investigation each prison gang member must undergo prior to being admitted to the program), offenders may view themselves as visitors in another world. Although they may work the program, is their limited stay long enough for them to become acculturated into a prosocial culture, especially when they will be released back into the dominant prison culture with

its own norms and values that do not mimic those of GRAD, let alone those of mainstream society?

While participating in GRAD, the inmates may prove to be bicultural, “conform[ing] to the rules which it shares with other groups, but also to those which are peculiarly its own” (Sellin, 1938, p. 29). They are able to “code-switch” (Anderson, 1999, p. 36) and maintain a foothold in various cultures. As “immigrants” in a new world, they “[learn] enough of the vernacular, social ritual and outward forms of the adopted country [in this case, GRAD] to be able to get by” (Valier, 2003, p. 13) so that they may be counted as a successful statistic by prison staff, complete the process, and be transferred to the general population.

Despite its intentions, does the de-gang environment unwittingly foster the values and norms of the code of prison? Tannenbaum (1938) states:

[The] important thing to remember is that we are dealing with a human being who is responding normally to the demands, stimuli, approval, expectancy, of the group with whom he is associated. We are dealing not with an individual but with a group (p. 20).

The Texas prison system is dealing with a group, group phenomena, and group behavior that is subject to how groups form and sustain themselves. When a group of offenders is mandated to coalesce into a group of prosocial individuals, it still remains a group of offenders who are responding to the demands and approval of their peers and, ultimately, of the greater prisoner community upon their return to the general population. The offender may simply lessen his hold on the street, convict and gang codes for the duration of the process, and reclaim them once he returns to his community – whether it is general population or his

own neighborhood – where the codes are still intact and his daily survival is at stake.

Resocialization in Prison

“It would be difficult to invent a more effective method for conditioning the criminal in his career than imprisoning him with some hundreds of other prisoners....”

–Frank Tannenbaum, *Crime and the Community*, 1938, p. 476

During a GRAD “completion ceremony”¹⁶⁹ at a TDCJ facility in East Texas in 2008, a prison representative ambled to the podium to address the graduating class of offenders to be formally recognized as “ex,” or former, prison gang members. He looked directly at the GRAD prisoners seated in rows before him and spoke. “Stand up.” They did. “Sit down.” And they did. The prison official then dryly commented that this was proof that the GRAD process had accomplished its goal of “brainwashing” its offenders, an editorialized inside joke directed toward current GRAD offenders who were observing the ceremony from the other side of the gymnasium and who had trivialized GRAD’s implications so early in their own progression to being prison-gang-free.

Rehabilitation versus Resocialization

Jankowski (1991) identifies two types of rehabilitation in prison: direct and indirect. *Direct rehabilitation* is synonymous with the stereotypical views of rehabilitation; that is, a problem is identified, the offender displays remorse for his actions, vows to change his behavior, perhaps engages in therapy to address the

¹⁶⁹ “Completion ceremonies” are held at the end of the nine-month GRAD process for all prison gang members who successfully complete it. This ceremony has become a ritual where GRAD participants are recognized by the correctional staff, teachers and counselors assigned to the program, certificates of completion are handed out, and participant testimonials delivered. The GRAD process will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

negative behavior, and is programmed with the prosocial values and norms of the greater community. He is returned to the free world a changed and compliant man. *Indirect rehabilitation* employs the concept of deterrence through the policy-induced “fear of being or remaining in confinement” (p. 274). Acknowledging that the segregation of gang members has not ended their criminal activity, Jankowski states that their “resist[ance to] such [rehabilitative] efforts” (p. 274) is the belief that these “efforts...are acts of indoctrination that must be resisted. They see rehabilitation as identical to government brainwashing or thought reform...” (p. 274). Evident in the aforementioned vignette is GRAD’s bid to overcome this viewpoint.

Are rehabilitation and resocialization, therefore, identical concepts? The process of “unlearning” (McHugh, 1966, p. 356) and “radically changed behavior” (McHugh, 1966, p. 356) are integral to rehabilitation, but resocialization centers on “changes in group membership” (McCorkle & Korn, 1954, p. 88) and the criminal norms and values carried from the street to prison (McCorkle & Korn, 1954), and the “adopt[ion of] values which are contradictory to the old ones binding the collectivity” (McHugh, 1966, p. 357).¹⁷⁰ Galtung (1958) differentiates between the two, clarifying that resocialization embodies a complete 180-degree

¹⁷⁰ McHugh explains that “desocialization” is necessary for resocialization: “Rather than adding the new to the old – plain socialization – the old must first be eliminated – desocialization” (p. 358). For the prison gang member, desocialization is similar to being “de-ganged,” or deprogrammed, and divested of all physical and mental gangster trappings. A *New York Times* article addressed the problem of prisoner reentry, notably the difficulty ex-offenders have subscribing to the basic self-imposed structure of mainstream workers: “It takes at least a year, Mr. Liebler said, to ‘deprogram’ the felons. Most have never owned an alarm clock – months can pass before they show up for class on time – and few can name a family member with a regular job. ‘We treat them as if they were in a cult,’ he said. ‘We have to reverse the thought process they’ve grown up into’” (Jacobs, 2008, “Seeking the key to employment for ex-cons”).

shift in direction in values with an attendant change in behavior to reflect these new values:

Resocialization means that he abstains from criminal acts when these acts are in his action-space, but are excluded because of the constraints from anticipated personal sanctions. Thus, resocialization implies rehabilitation, *but the converse need not be true....Rehabilitation may result from the disappearance of the illegal acts from the action-space* (Galtung, 1958, p. 129).

The offender, however, needs to find something else to substitute for the criminal act that will fulfill the needs met from committing crime, and these needs depend upon the “meaning of the crime for the criminal” (Galtung, 1958, p. 130).

The expectations and perceptions of inmates, correctional officers and prison administration also lead to differences in defining rehabilitation and resocialization. For example, if the individual is a model prisoner, obeying all to secure a coveted job within the prison or be transferred to a trusty camp to improve his status, he may be manipulating the system to get what he wants, which, in a sense, is what administration intends for him to do because it makes the prison unit function more smoothly and efficiently (at least to satisfy administration's goals of maintaining safety and security). Prison officials may then label this offender as being “rehabilitated” (i.e., his behavior seems to prove that point, even if he is merely fronting), but he is not necessarily “resocialized,” at least not until he is presented with other opportunities to break the law or violate prison rules and deliberately chooses not to because of the anticipated personal sanctions and consequences (i.e., he has internalized the values and norms of the broader law-abiding society, and restored a lost conscience) (Galtung, 1958). Based on case studies presented in his research, Clemmer

(1940) and the “inmate advisors” who independently ascertained a level of prisonization among inmates, concluded that “most men in penitentiaries have no chance of being salvaged if they become prisonized to any appreciable extent” (p. 313). He clarified that those inmates who appear to be rehabilitated through participation in prison treatment programs may merely be individuals who did not deserve to be incarcerated in the first place, were only “slightly” prisonized, or had aged out of crime during the course of their imprisonment.

Should We Expect Resocialization to Work in Prison?

To what extent does the prison community provide opportunities for altering the group memberships and reversing the socialization process which contributed to the criminal behavior of those incarcerated in it?

—McCorkle & Korn, 1954, p. 88

Galtung (1958), having served a six-month sentence in a Norwegian prison as a “conscientious objector” (p. 127), interviewed guards and staff after his release to answer this question and ultimately its impact on recidivism, the standard measure of effectiveness of prison. Based on the various conditions of confinement previously mentioned (i.e., inmate frustrations; the battle between administration and prisoner norms; and the officer/inmate rules for coexisting, especially as enumerated in the convict code), Galtung offered rehabilitation, and not resocialization, as the mechanism accounting for any lack of recidivism. It may be that society is simply lucky that those who do not commit new crimes are not presented with the opportunities, and not because they have internalized new norms and values.

Conditions Conducive to Resocialization

For resocialization to occur, Galtung (1958) believes that the prisoner must first “[internalize the] norm system [of the administration]” (p. 138), which includes the inmate’s responsibility to follow prison rules, the realization that he has to pay for his crime through incarceration, active participation in prison programming, and the understanding that rehabilitation is part of the carceral experience (pp. 130-131). Galtung argues that if inmates do not see the therapeutic benefit and only think that prison “makes us worse” (p. 138), they will remain frustrated and opt to “escape” physically and emotionally, thwarting any attempts at resocialization. However, not all hope is lost, as the following options for resocialization to occur in the prison setting are presented:

- (1) If the inmate can find another “primary” group within prison with which to associate (besides the prisoners’ community), then perhaps he has a chance at being resocialized while incarcerated. Galtung (1958) offers a “primary relations[hip] with the guards” (p. 138) as one avenue, but rejects this notion because such a relationship is prohibited in prison, as it violates the norms of both prisoners’ and officers’ groups. Another caveat to such a relationship between officer and inmate, even if it were not prohibited by the convict code? Citing McCorkle and Korn (1954) to explain why this would be ill-advised, Galtung (1958) explains that prison staff are more susceptible to being corrupted and compromised with such a “decrease in social distance” (p. 138).

- (2) Counselors, psychiatrists, chaplains and other helping professionals may assume a secondary relationship with inmates, an idea Galtung (1958) proposes but dismisses. Regardless of the time inmates may spend with a counselor, they remain in prison and immersed in the prison culture; so what is it that the counselor is doing for that short period of time with the inmates that will sustain them throughout their sentence to survive incarceration (p. 138)? Changing the role of the correctional officer, who spends considerably more time with the offenders than do counselors, might be one solution (Galtung, 1958). As will be discussed in the next chapter, can this role change be done in the GRAD process? Even if it can be done, and correctional staff can channel their inner co-therapist, what is to be expected when the offender leaves GRAD and is placed in the general population on another prison unit with correctional officers not versed in therapeutic techniques and programming? Will the inmate then backtrack to make up for lost “prison culture” time and return to his psychological pre-GRAD status so he can survive prison life in his new facility? Or will sending GRAD completers to select facilities that have an established culture not conducive to gang activity allow them to continue their resocialization?
- (3) Prison society needs to reflect the real society to which inmates will be released. Galtung (1958) proposes the “ideal” prison to be one that adopts a “continuous role-playing session, with some of the

varieties and irregularities of real social life built into it” (p. 139). If this is the recipe for effective resocialization, how does a program like GRAD achieve this, especially when its participants will be returned to the general population that does not even attempt to mimic this? For offenders in GRAD, those nine months do not resemble daily life for the rest of Texas prison inmates who have not been cocooned in therapeutic programming and breaking bread with only a non-changing handful of other inmates.

Prison cannot be all things to everyone. Can it meet the demands of administration to guarantee safety and security at all costs *and* effect positive change in offenders, as TDCJ’s mission statement requires? Galtung (1958) concluded that prison cannot satisfactorily provide for all of the reasons it was intended. Perhaps a “sequence of institutions might be the solution” (Galtung, 1958, p. 140) with each catering to a different social function to encourage a life resocialized.

Perception of Self and Others: Transforming Resocialization into “Transformation”

Koehler (2000), in his interviews with La Nuestra Familia members in a Colorado prison,¹⁷¹ concluded that the gang is a “means through which convicts construct and maintain an identity in an environment in which standards of conduct are reduced to the essentials of individual psychological and physical survival” (pp. 177-178). The inmate’s self-perception and identity are derived

¹⁷¹ La Nuestra Familia (NF) is a California-based prison gang. Koehler, a former inmate and NF member, conducted interviews with NF members and other inmates in a Colorado state prison and identified one of the gang’s functions as that of a “mutual aid society” (p. 157) for its members.

from the group and are molded by not only “his own interpretation of his associates’ interpretation of him” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 112), but also “his own recognition of his status in other groups” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 112). For example, the punishments heaped onto offenders, according to Sykes (1958),

may lead to an increased prestige for the punished inmate in the eyes of his fellow prisoners....In the dialectics of the inmate populations, punishment and rewards have, then, been reversed and the control measures of the officials may support disobedience rather than decrease it (p. 51).

For the gang member in prison, the most severe punishment of administrative segregation can boost his status into the criminal stratosphere. Whether or not he begins to believe his own potential for danger and violence may depend upon his treatment by staff and other inmates.

A Texas correctional officer once attributed the propensity for worsened behavior to a self-fulfilling prophecy; that is, prison gang members who are placed in segregation “believe the hype that they are invincible” and indeed the worst of the worst (Z.T., personal communication, late 2006). Operating statewide STG offices and separating STG members from general prison population inmates reinforce the prison gangster’s perception that he is the one who controls. Griffin (2007) asserts that the “high visibility” of this approach “may very well increase the profile and status of a gang” (p. 228). McCorkle and Korn (1954) contend that the inmate social system, with its “rigidly hierarchical character” (p. 89) where once an offender has been labeled, that is his label to wear (similar to sex offenders occupying one of the lowest positions in the moral hierarchy), grants him with a “severely limited [number of roles he may play] and, once assigned, are maintained” (p. 89). Reputation and status are conferred

once the offender is sucked into the system and plays by its rules. However, one warden, in response to this question about gang members in segregation feeling compelled to live up to the caricatured “hype” of being a predatory gangster, disagreed and countered with:

My circumstance has been every time you talk to or see them, they do the opposite. “I am not doing nothing. Look at my record. Y’all locked me up and somebody got confirmed.” There are some who say, “Yeah, I’m a gang member,” but a lot of them will say, “Y’all got me confirmed, but I’m not a gang member.” They fight that or argue, just the opposite. They do have a swagger about them, they’re confident, but I’ve never seen anybody elevate their behavior based on that, even the young guys (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

While some prison gang members may adopt the role of the “badass” (Katz, 1988, p. 87) and others, the innocent, some may also choose the role of the martyr and wrongly-imprisoned. According to one Texas prison gang official, they may perceive themselves as taking the punishment for “the cause”:

When I read about POWs [prisoners of war], they were the offenders to me [relating the POW plight in solitary and how those emotions and experiences could be transferred to the Ad Seg offender]. What did they do? What was the psychological aspect of it? They were in prison without doing anything wrong. They were heroes. It’s the same thing with these guys. They think they’re heroes to follow the gangsters, and The Man [the prison system] is doing this to them. I’m just going with the flow. I’m just working with the same emotions... (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007)

that were played to entice them to join the gang in the first place. Galtung (1958) labeled this type of response to imprisonment – joining the prisoners’ community with its belief that the system has wronged the inmate – as “dysfunctional” (p. 138) to successful resocialization.

Once stripped down and the layers of culture shed, each ex-prison gang member must be rebuilt. Rene “Boxer” Enriquez, a former high-ranking California Mexican Mafia member who “defected” from the gang in March 2002 (Blatchford, 2008, p. xiii), addressed “mourning [his] own death” when he decided to disassociate from the gang after almost two decades of committed service and sacrifice.

I think destroying myself, my gang alter ego, was [the hardest part of dropping out of the gang]. You know, all these mobsters are egocentric. Huge senses of who they are....So in a sense, killing off ‘Boxer’ [his moniker], the gang member, was the hardest part. That’s all I ever knew. That’s who I was. That’s who I thought I was....So this is my perception of who I was. I wasn’t Rene Enriquez the father, the brother, the husband, the friend, the man. It was Boxer the Mexican Mafia member. So in a sense I had this surreal experience that I was mourning my own death....I had this depression during the first few weeks. Like I was alive but I was mourning my own death (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Finding some way out”).

A Texas inmate who completed the GRAD process echoed this sentiment when he renounced and was characterized as a less-than-stellar-criminal by fellow inmates: “It was a painful blow to my self-image and pride, because this criminal lifestyle and its associations was [sic] all I ever knew” (TDCJ, 2008, “Letters to the editor,” p. 2). Once this image is cast, prison must offer a replacement. As Byrne (2006) stated in his public testimony before the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, “Give them something different that will make them have a different view of their lives and their life course changes” (“Addressing violence,” p. 74).

“Giving” without the chance to practice is an empty offer; inmates must be presented with opportunities to succeed with their newfound changes in self-

perception (McCorkle & Korn, 1954). Just as anyone learning a new skill requires ample opportunity to practice to perfect, so does the inmate: He needs to “[learn], [test], and [fixate on] newer, more effective modes of perceiving and relating to his human environment” (McCorkle & Korn, 1954, p. 97). Inmates serving life sentences at Graterford Prison in Pennsylvania have tried to distance themselves from a culture of crime by establishing a prisoners’ group called LIFERS and holding “town hall” meetings as part of its “Ending the Culture of Street Crime” program (Fish, 2005). They are attempting to “transform what [prisoners] think and value” from the inside out – and at the peer group level. James Byrne, during his testimony before the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons in 2006, characterized a program like LIFERS as a “positive gang” and viable alternative to gangs in prison (“Addressing violence,” p. 120),¹⁷² and Anthony Delgado with the Ohio prison system reiterated the simple realization that “you can’t take somebody away from a gang membership without offering them something else” (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, 2006, “Addressing violence,” p. 123).

“Exiting Deviance”: Do All Resocialized Things Come to Those Who Wait?

The effects of prisonization may vary at the different stages in an inmate’s “institutional career” (Wheeler, 1961, p. 697), with “evidence of a recovery process and a shedding of the prison culture” (Wheeler, 1961, p. 697) the closer inmates approach parole or release; however, it is not known if this happens to offenders transferring from a prison *within* a prison, from Ad Seg to the general

¹⁷² Neither Byrne nor Fish mentioned if LIFERS participants had to be or had been classified as prison gang members.

population, as is the case for most Texas prison gang members in GRAD. Garabedian (1963) wistfully states that the “process of anticipatory socialization, which many inmates apparently undergo prior to release, may be strong enough to ‘undo’ or ‘override’ many of the specific effects incurred during incarceration” (p. 152). Prison gang membership provides another layer to remove, one that is a lifestyle and hardly seems easy to cast aside simply because a release date is nearing – especially when it was entered into as a lifelong commitment.

Countering Clemmer’s argument that the longer an individual is incarcerated, the more prisonized he becomes, Wheeler (1961) found empirical evidence that “from the inmate’s perspective[,] the length of time *remaining* to be served may be the most crucial temporal aspect” (p. 698), thus indicating that the inmate about to be released back to the community has a shift in perception and, in turn, behavior. According to Wheeler (1961), Clemmer erroneously assumed that the effects of prisonization were static throughout an inmate’s incarceration and afforded little attention to those “changes that might occur as inmates neared the time for release [on parole]” (p. 698). The expectation of release is sufficient to initiate behavioral change, regardless of any administrative attempt at resocialization. Wheeler also detected a period of “re-prisonization” (p. 702) for recidivists shuffled back to prison. Might those offenders completing GRAD undergo a similar process when transferred to the general prison population?

The (Im-)Plausibility and (Im-)Possibility of Resocialization: De-gangng Gangsters and Obstacles to Resocialization in Prison

“Most of us are trying to straighten up,[...] but mind you, we’re all criminals and it’s hard to get rid of that criminal mind-set. So when you get a bunch of criminals together, criminal shit is going to happen.”

–“Pete,” Tango Blast member in Port Arthur, Texas (Vogel, 2007)

As illustrated throughout, gang members deal with the “three Rs”: reputation, respect and retaliation/revenge (Triplett, 2004). But is there room for a fourth – resocialization?

Most groups choose to obey the rules and regulations imposed upon them because they know that doing so “will advance the subordinate’s interests” (Sykes, 1958, p. 47), and this “obedience or conformity springs from an internalized morality which transcends the personal feelings of the individual” (Sykes, 1958, p. 47). In prison, according to Sykes, this “sense of duty” to comply with the rules is “lacking in the general inmate population” (p. 47). Prisoners understand the legitimacy of the prison’s rules and rulers, but they feel no “internalized obligation to obey” (p. 48) either. How does TDCJ create this “inner moral compulsion to obey” (Sykes, 1958, p. 48) before, during and after participation in GRAD? These offenders voluntarily admit that life in the gang no longer meets their needs for a host of reasons, thus their admission to the GRAD process (and they may be seen as agreeing with and obeying staff in order to accomplish their primary goal, which is freedom from segregation). Is their obedience in the program due to a directional change in their moral compass, or is it what Sykes (1958) speaks to – they are aware of correctional staff’s need for control, but they will not feel obligated to continue to comply once they have earned their reward, which is out of segregation and into population?

Good Morning, You’re Still in Prison

Because prisons “develop sub-cultures specific to the problems imposed by their rather unique character, their members may be insulated from lasting socialization effects” (Wheeler, 1961, p. 711). Even for those prison gang

members who complete the renunciation process, the questions remain: Can resocialization and its effects last when every day is another day lived in prison? If the process succeeds at taking the *gang* out of the *gangster*, can *prison* be taken out of the *prisoner*? It may be that the Texas prison system, through its GRAD process, is hoping to create another prison subculture of former prison gang members, one where therapeutic programming (primarily cognitive intervention and anger management skills) are part of the code.

Assuming for a moment that prison gang members can successfully transition from segregation to the relatively-sheltered existence in GRAD (with 16 to 20 offenders in their mini-therapeutic community) and then to the general population, this must be remembered: They are still *in* prison, they wake up every day *in* prison, and they still have to survive *in* prison. As was said about a former high-ranking member of the California Mexican Mafia who continued to use and sell drugs in the prison after dropping out of the gang, he “quit the gang, but he hasn’t quit committing crimes” (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Transcript”).

Anecdotal evidence supports the difficulty in promoting “lasting socialization effects” and reconciling the image of repaired STG member with that of general population offender. For example, a former prison gang member who had successfully completed the renunciation process attempted to swallow a ring a visitor had given him. According to a prison official, “That’s ‘convict’ behavior,” and not gang-related (P.F., personal communication, early 2010). Similarly, two ex-STG members who had also completed the GRAD process and moved on to a new facility ended up in a fight – a fight over who was better

versed in Scripture. However, they did apologize to one another after the blood was wiped away and the bruising subsided (P.F., personal communication, January 31, 2007). It was conflict resolution by bloodshed, in accordance with the convict code. And in California, two “dropouts” from the California Mexican Mafia prison gang were housed in protective custody as county jail cellmates. One of them took offense at his cellmate’s poor hygiene habits and concocted a plan to grant him his wish: no more baths, ever. After an unsuccessful drugging-by-hoarded-Seroquel, the offender eventually strangled his cellmate, and, for a day, he “periodically moved [the victim’s] body [around in the cell]...in order to trick guards into believing the man was still alive” (Leveque, 2006, “Charges filed in bizarre killing”). True, the two men had left their gang and the gang life, but they were unable to distance themselves from the rules that govern prison life.

SUMMARY

This chapter began with an overview of the nature of prison gangs, including their characteristics and organization, propensity for violence, and differences between these groups and street gangs. Prison administration responses to managing prison gang members were also presented, along with the tradeoffs between the safety and security of the institution and the potential psychologically damaging effects of segregation. The discussion then centered on the many layers of culture, including street, gang and prison, with which the prison gang member – and the prison system – must struggle.¹⁷³ Prison gang

¹⁷³ Another layer with which the prison system must confront is the White supremacist ideology. The Aryan-based STGs mask their criminal enterprise with this belief system. Not only must correctional staff address the prison and prison gang layers of culture, but also the "White is right" bent with which those members have been indoctrinated. Hispanic gang members may focus on "familia" and cultural pride, but for the Aryan-based, it is separatism masked as "cultural

culture is prison culture on steroids; every understood and unspoken rule, code and norm are magnified and exponentially applied. The institutional culture, including the role of wardens, correctional officers and the helping professionals in the inmate's bid for resocialization, offers a glimpse into how the offenders are perceived and defined by their relationships with each and how these views might impact their expectations for internal change. Wanting STG members to renounce and disassociate physically and emotionally from the gang is only a first step. Implicit in this is the dissolution of the gang persona and the system's obligation to offer them another identity in prison that fills the needs previously met by their involvement in the gang. The road to resocialization in prison is fraught with obstacles, and, even if prison gang members are able to extract the gangster from their identity, they remain incarcerated and must abide by the convict code. The next chapter will explore TDCJ's GRAD process to address these issues.

pride" and violent discrimination against all others. The prejudice displayed by most Aryan-based gangs is at the surface; it is their reason for being and sustains their existence. This is an additional component to address in future research.

Chapter 3: TDCJ's Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) Process

"For 16 years, 23 hours a day, I've lived like an animal. I'm ready for something different. I'm tired of this whole gang mentality."

—ex-Texas Mafia member and GRAD offender (quoted in Timms, 2001)

Highway 288, the main thoroughfare from big city – Houston, Texas – to prison town – Rosharon, Texas – is more commonly known as Nolan Ryan Expressway, a nod to the Hall of Fame pitcher who hails from Alvin, Texas. It is fitting that Highway 288 delivers one closer to the Ramsey Unit, one of two prisons offering the GRAD process,¹⁷⁴ because prison and incarceration, after all, are as American as baseball and apple pie.

Renunciation: First Step or Final Leap toward Resocialization?

This chapter will thoroughly examine TDCJ's Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) process with an emphasis on its history and early incarnations, the three phases toward renunciation and resocialization, the ins-and-outs of the process, the repercussions to renunciation, and the prison system's early responses toward GRAD's success at producing "former" prison gang members.¹⁷⁵

GRAD Mission Statement

The mission statement for TDCJ's GRAD process is straightforward enough: "To provide a safe and secure environment for those offenders who choose to voluntarily renounce their gang affiliation by affording a structured

¹⁷⁴ The GRAD process was expanded to the Ellis Unit in Huntsville and welcomed its first class on October 27, 2008.

¹⁷⁵ I was first introduced to GRAD in 2001 as part of my professional employment.

process that will furnish the proper tools to reintegrate offenders into the general population” (GRAD Completion Ceremony program, Ellis Unit, January 27, 2012). But like any mission statement, it cannot and does not fully capture the subtleties and realities of prison gang renunciation. Modeled after the Connecticut Department of Correction’s gang renunciation program that was implemented in 1994 (Ward, 1998, “State makes plea”), yet modified to be Texas-specific,¹⁷⁶ GRAD was implemented in 1999 at the Ramsey Unit (formerly the Ramsey I Unit) in Rosharon, Texas. The original idea was borne not out of a faith in rehabilitation or the noblest of intentions to save a soul – although these

¹⁷⁶ In 1998, the Connecticut Department of Correction (CDC) estimated approximately 900 of its 16,000 inmates to be gang members. During this same year, TDCJ estimated 5,000 of its 143,000 inmates to be confirmed prison gang members (Ward, 1998, “State makes plea”). The size and scope of the gang problem within Texas facilities clearly dwarfed that of Connecticut; thus, incorporating any of CDC’s anti-gang programs would require an overhaul to best suit TDCJ’s specific needs.

In 1994, the CDC developed the “Gang Management Program,” a three-phase program based on voluntary participation and renunciation in order to reduce the level of gang violence in its facilities. Information presented during a 2000 National Institute of Corrections videoconference identified 2,000 offenders as recognized gang members, which comprised 18% of its prison population, and 180 cells were devoted to the gang renunciation program. The program takes approximately 18 months to complete for the 12 offenders in each renunciation group. The first phase, which lasts at least four months (but may be longer, depending on individual offender need), is presented as a “cooling off” period where members from the same gang are housed together and introduced to cultural diversity and gang awareness classes. According to Carlson (2001), prison gang members are isolated from other gang members and associates in preparation for the other two phases. Groups are limited to 12 participants – “equal” parts of each gang – for a three- to four-month “educational agenda” (p. 21). In Phase II, offenders advance to being double-celled with a member from a rival gang. This four- to six-month phase requires offenders to participate in group therapy and team-building exercises. (However, Maghan [2004] writes that Phase II “takes approximately 60 days to complete” [p. 17]). Phase III prepares each for transfer to the general population and only then requires them to sign a contract that they have renounced. Once in general population, these ex-gang members are tracked for at least one year and interviewed bi-weekly to gauge their assimilation into general population. Should they re-join a gang, they forfeit the privilege of remaining in a minimum security facility and are re-classified as an STG member for the remainder of their sentence. A CDC representative stressed that the “focus is on the individual and not the gang. [We] make it undesirable to be in a gang” (National Institute of Corrections, 2000). But does this emphasis on the individual ignore the impact of groups and natural group formation within prison, where “normal” life is lived at an accelerated pace?

are fortunate consequences – but out of necessity, according to a program administrator in the prison’s Rehabilitation Programs Division (formerly known as the Rehabilitation and Reentry Division) (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005). Beds in Ad Seg were at a premium and TDCJ, quite simply, did not have enough space to segregate all validated STG members, and this prompted the realization: “Somebody said we did a great job of identifying them, but now what” (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005)? At some point, TDCJ needed to progress beyond identification to disassociation, and from there, to reintegration.

Prior to GRAD’s inception, a gang member only had to undergo a two-year investigation before returning to the general population, according to administrative staff in the Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) in Huntsville (T.G., personal communication, April 8, 2005). But today, GRAD is the sole path an STG member can take if he wishes to be released from Ad Seg. While it is relatively easy to be committed to confinement *if* one is a confirmed STG member (based on a host of criteria and internal agency checks and balances, as mentioned earlier), it is more difficult to get out, as renunciation is the only ticket available.

Eligibility Criteria and Offender Introduction to the GRAD Process

The introduction to GRAD begins upon admission to TDCJ. New offenders are informed of the process’s existence, and a paragraph (two sentences, actually) is devoted to it in the *Offender Orientation Handbook* (2004).¹⁷⁷ More recently, TDCJ has posted information on prison gangs on its

¹⁷⁷ See p. 26. “If a confirmed security threat group member wishes to disassociate with their current affiliation, the offender may request to be considered for the Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) Process. Upon approval, the offender must complete the GRAD process

public Web site, complete with the basic steps necessary to initiate the GRAD process (TDCJ, 2007, "Security threat groups: On the inside," p. 4). It is a three-phase, nine-month process¹⁷⁸ of increasing responsibility, less restrictive movement, and therapeutic programming that provides opportunities for substance abuse treatment, chaplaincy, cognitive intervention and restructuring, anger management, and educational and vocational programs, none of which is available to inmates in Ad Seg. It begins with a two-year, pre-admission Disassociation Investigation (known as the "DI"),¹⁷⁹ initiated at the request of an interested offender and designed to assess sincerity and commitment. (However, offenders who become confidential informants or testify in court against fellow members may bypass the two-year investigation and be admitted to an upcoming GRAD group, if they meet all other eligibility requirements, as court testimony that incriminates another – or snitching – is the ultimate act of renunciation and a clear violation of street, gang and convict codes.) To be eligible, the offender must meet several criteria, including, but not limited to, the

before they are reviewed for release from administrative segregation and returned to general population status" (TDCJ, 2004, "Offender orientation handbook").

¹⁷⁸ The Ramsey Unit process is nine months long; however, GRAD at the Ellis Unit lasts approximately nine and a half months due to "the way [the] unit [is] set up" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) and to accommodate summer and winter breaks for Windham teachers who are responsible for the cognitive intervention portion of the curriculum (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). When questioned why the process is nine months long, staff in the STGMO offered a possible but unconfirmed explanation: "I'm sure it has to do with the dovetailing of classification and records issues, STG issues and classes. I would think those three things [are] what inspired the nine months. And Windham School District. They're only in session for nine months out of the year" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

¹⁷⁹ According to TDCJ's public Web site, the DI typically is a two-year investigation: An offender "[m]ust not have been involved in any Security Threat Group act for a minimum of two (2) years." (See the GRAD Process at http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/cid/cid_stgmo_GRAD.html.) However, data received from TDCJ in April 2012 revealed a possible monitoring policy change to a "12-month disassociation period" (N.J., personal communication, April 3, 2012). For purposes of this study, the DI will be referred to as a two-year investigation, as that has been the standard investigation time frame since GRAD's inception.

following: renounce membership in an identified STG and request to participate in GRAD; display no assaultive behavior toward other inmates and correctional staff for at least two years; exhibit no sexually aggressive behavior for at least two years; refrain from participating in extortion or possessing weapons for at least two years; have no involvement in any STG activity for at least two years; receive no major disciplinary actions for at least one year; be an Ad Seg Security Detention Level 1 offender for at least a year; and sign a GRAD Renouncement Form.

Additionally, some offenders who voluntarily renounce and begin the investigative process may not be admitted to GRAD if their prison classification prohibits them from advancing to a less restrictive environment. For example, offenders who have previously attempted to escape from prison must first have their “escape status” removed before being permitted to participate in GRAD (granted they meet the other GRAD requirements) (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012; A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). Offenders with “security precaution designators of...Staff Assault, or...Hostage Situation” also are not allowed to participate in GRAD until those designators are lifted (TDCJ, “Security threat group management office”).

On paper, GRAD is a vertical galaxy of boxes and arrows, indicating where an offender should be at any phase of the process, and where he will end up should he fail to follow or comply with the rules. If it were a board game, the offender who eventually reaches “General Population” would be declared a winner.

Prior to admission, offenders' files are reviewed and needs assessments conducted to determine if GRAD is appropriate. If the STGMO approves the offender for GRAD, he is further screened for possible conflicts that would preclude him from participation, such as enemy conflicts that would place others at greater risk for injury, escape risk, or medical needs. For example, non-ambulatory STG members who qualify for GRAD may "need to go to a specific class where they can be on the ground floor" (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). The Ellis Unit, according to one STGMO employee,

does not have facilities for ground floor offenders. It's only Ramsey that has ground floor facilities. If they have an enemy at Ramsey and they are ground floor, we either have to move the enemy or...sometimes the enemy is in a class. So we usually have to wait. Again, they would have some sort of put-off too, but not because they've done anything wrong, just because we can't get them in there. Some of them are wheelchair bound. Some of them have to have physical therapy. Some of them have to have dialysis. Ramsey nor Ellis, either one, is equipped for those. So if they have a medical problem like that, then I think the process has been so far that they will be reviewed by our office and [the Deputy Director's] office for renouncement or ex-ing just because of that (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Regarding admission, the STGMO clarified that its staff "can't override medical, or classification, or plans and policies," despite an offender being "pre-qualified"¹⁸⁰ to participate in GRAD (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012):

The STGMO does not prohibit anybody from going to GRAD who has done the investigation, the [paperwork] has been done, and they're qualified to go. It isn't STGMO who prohibits anybody from going based upon any criteria other than what we already have. So if there is a

¹⁸⁰ This term refers to an offender who has formally renounced his STG membership, finished the necessary paperwork, successfully completed the Disassociation Investigation, and is awaiting assignment to a GRAD group.

medical restriction, it's not us who's stopping them....If I have a space and the guy has got a medical condition, I can still put him on my list [to participate in GRAD]. And as far as we're concerned, he's qualified. If the classification department or somebody else determines he can't transfer because of a condition, then that's beyond our control (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

It is a balancing act to weed out those whose intentions are suspect from those who are sincere. Urban legends, even in a controlled and controlling environment such as prison, still take root, and the possibility of an offender attempting to infiltrate the program for the purpose of conducting a hit on another graduate or a rival in the general population may always be present, although such claims have yet to be substantiated. Intentions can never completely be neutralized or behavior predicted with pinpoint accuracy, so the best that can be done is minimize the threat, be vigilant and, when all criteria are met and admission granted, have a little calculated faith.

De-ganging Gangsters in Nine Months: The Three Trimesters of GRAD and the Birth of an Ex-Gangster

"A person will do better in a better environment only because it's the natural thing to do."

—P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007

Upon successfully completing the two-year investigation and meeting all eligibility requirements, the soon-to-be-formally-recognized-ex-STG member is transferred to the Ramsey or Ellis Unit to begin the process.¹⁸¹ He is greeted by

¹⁸¹ The GRAD process was expanded to the Ellis Unit in Huntsville in October 2008 and welcomed its first GRAD class after an overhaul and remodel of the prison's gymnasium to offer adequate classroom and office space. The three new classrooms have space for 20 offenders in each class, which are four more per class than at the Ramsey Unit. When asked about the theoretical basis for selecting cohorts of 16 offenders for the Ramsey Unit, the response was simple: "We had 16 cells on the unit. That's why we decided 16 would work" (P.F., personal communication, June 11, 2007). When the same question was later posed about the Ellis Unit's groups of 20, the response was similar, but accompanied by a chuckle (P.F., personal communication, June 11, 2007). Staff at the Ellis Unit iterated this explanation for group size:

a collaborative team of teachers, counselors and security staff (lieutenant, captain, sergeants and correctional officers) who balance their roles as nurturers, limit-setters, teachers and positive role models. Rules are discussed, requirements and expectations addressed, and, should the offender not successfully complete the process, consequences are inevitable. The process itself is not considered “treatment” – there is no couch or individual psychoanalysis spanning decades to understand why Little Johnny joined a gang or never learned to tie his own shoes – but rather a combination of educational and didactic groups designed to challenge the offenders’ thoughts and beliefs, teach basic social skills, foster empathy toward fellow group mates, and prepare each offender for his return to the general prison population, where he can take advantage of other educational and vocational programming available to other offenders in the prison system.

Phase I

Phase I of the GRAD process is split into two distinct stages, A and B, designed to “normalize” the offender and his behavior before complete immersion into the resocialization process.¹⁸² Offenders remain in Ad Seg on the unit’s GRAD wing and are single-celled for the first two months of the process. Although they are segregated, each offender is housed in the same wing with other like-minded prison gang members wanting to earn the “ex” status. All

“Because each row [in a cellblock] has 20 cells. That’s one row. One row, one class” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

¹⁸² For example, inmates are informed about how they are supposed to dress while on the unit, how they are to greet staff who enter the unit, how they should interact with female staff, etc.

offenders remain in their cells, but they enjoy more in-and-out-of-cell privileges as they navigate the process.

Stage A of Phase I lasts for four weeks and provides an orientation to the process, in-cell programming (which involves videotaped lessons piped in to a video monitor in each cell that cover a range of topics, including substance abuse education,¹⁸³ domestic violence, and the identification of “thinking errors”), and chaplaincy information to lay the foundation for the remaining months. Counselors meet with each offender who must complete a series of worksheets based on the videos viewed. One counselor summarized the Phase I orientation and in-cell curriculum:

We get [the offenders] when we first come in, and the officers put them in their houses [cells] and we go in. That’s when we start talking with them. They’re individually celled....We get to know them. Then we give them our orientation. Then we start their videotapes. Basically, what I do is I hand them assignments each day. I have them sign in. I ask them how they’re doing....So we have an in-house assignment, and we have videos that go with the assignment. We put a video in; they watch the video. First we have what they call a pre-video page that they fill out the night before or before they see the video. And then they watch the video, and they answer the questions after they’ve seen the video. Most of the videos are based on substance abuse. Substance abuse use, misuse, and addiction. And they also see videos...of Dr. [Stanton] Samenow on all the cognitive intervention choices....Then we have abuse issues where they are made aware of what abuse is – verbal, mental, physical. And they’re also made aware of how it affects all the people around them, not [just] themselves. Then they are made aware of what is not okay and what is okay, and how they can change....Then we have videos for self-help. We show them a secular organization for sobriety video, an NA [Narcotics Anonymous] meeting video, and then an AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] meeting video. Then we start talking with them about challenging their belief system, and

¹⁸³ According to TDCJ’s public Web site, offenders complete 30-35 substance abuse lessons, each lasting two and a half hours, during Phase I (TDCJ, “Security threat group management office”).

we talk with them about things that they've been through. And a lot of the men have experienced traumas from childhood (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

The offenders are prepped and primed for change, as they compose their life stories to uncover past behavior, trauma and thoughts that provide some explanation for how they ended up in their current situation.

During this first stage, offenders eat their meals in their own cells, have recreation by themselves, and shower individually, and movement is restricted. Because they remain in "close custody" and are still considered Ad Seg offenders, they are escorted by security staff whenever out of their cells. The transition from being an STG member in Ad Seg with no interaction with other offenders is a slow and methodical one. Upon completion of Stage A, offenders progress to Stage B, which lasts for the next five weeks.¹⁸⁴ They continue to eat their meals alone in their cells, but they are now eligible for recreation with other GRAD inmates. According to one GRAD officer at the Ellis Unit, staff "double rec" the offenders during the last six weeks of Phase I so they can ward off the "shell shock" and "get acclimated to being around other people" prior to advancing to the group setting of Phase II (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012). A counselor applauded this change, explaining that

[staff] used to always rec them separately while they were in [Phase I Ad Seg cells]....Now...they'll rec them two at a time. It's like, "What are you doing? You keep them in [Phase I Ad Seg], one to a cell, and miraculously, on a given day, you put 20 of them in my classroom [to

¹⁸⁴ The length of the entire process varies slightly, depending upon the unit. For example, Phase I at the Ellis Unit lasts nine weeks; for the Ramsey Unit, it is eight weeks. Phase II at Ellis is four and a half months; it is four months long at Ramsey. Phase III at both units runs for three months. When questioned about these differences, an officer at the Ellis Unit admitted that the slight changes work better "for the way our unit is set up. That's the *only* reason" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

begin Phase II], they're all right?" No, you've got to see if there's a problem there (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Even the transitions need transitions.

Phase II

The road to resocialization formally begins once the offenders advance to Phase II. During this four-month phase, inmates are double-celled with a member from an historical rival gang. Unlike the rest of the prison experience that is heavily laced with racism and like-remains-with-like, offenders undergo a forced desegregation – by race, by gang (enemy/rival), and by “lone” status. Where they were once accustomed to life in a single cell in solitary confinement, they now have to learn to share. Some of the progress toward introspection made during Phase I may be tempered by the introduction of a new cellmate, or “cellie,” as each offender is still governed by the prison culture and inmate code. Therefore, sizing up a new “cellie” and jockeying for position in the prisoner hierarchy are not easily forgotten simply because the GRAD process and staff wish them so. No two members of the same prison gang are housed as cellmates (staff do not want the offenders to re-group into a version of their old gang), and prison staff attempt to pair up offenders who would be most compatible.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Teachers and counselors may make recommendations regarding which offenders, in their opinions, would be best matched with another. These recommendations may be based on responses to worksheet lessons and conversations with counselors during Phase I (for example, two offenders who exhibit similar personality traits or housekeeping tendencies may be a logical choice as cellmates). However, because “security is never convenient,” as placards throughout the units attest, and always of utmost importance, security staff are responsible for final cellmate decisions (for example, they will consider physical attributes of offenders and most likely will not place an offender with a slight build in a cell with a more hulking figure).

In addition to these changes in cellblock lifestyle, Phase II also introduces offenders to the heart and soul of the process, notably the cognitive skills program, which is implemented through the Windham School District (WSD), and anger management/substance abuse education and the “criminal addictive behavior” cycle.¹⁸⁶ Participants are no longer confined to their cells, as they collectively move to the unit classroom for anger management, cognitive intervention and restructuring programs, cultural diversity, and problem-solving lessons.

Phase II Curriculum: Cognitive Intervention (Imprisoned by Thoughts and Beliefs)

Offenders receive 180 hours of cognitive intervention education (TDCJ, “Security threat group management office”) taught by GRAD teachers (also referred to as “cognitive-intervention facilitators”),¹⁸⁷ all of whom are employed by the WSD.¹⁸⁸ The cognitive intervention skills module was developed with technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections and is offered

¹⁸⁶ The WSD, the prison-operated school system, was established in 1969 and is funded through the Texas Education Agency (Ward, 2011, “Senate: Cut \$34 million from prison schools”). In the midst of budget woes played out in the 82nd Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, “Senate leaders tentatively agreed [on March 21, 2011,] to cut \$34 million” from WSD’s budget. This compromise followed an earlier Senate proposal that “the district be abolished” (Ward, 2011, “Senate: Cut \$34 million from prison schools”). Their budget ultimately remained intact. For more information about WSD and the educational and vocational programs it provides for eligible offenders, see WSD’s *Annual Performance Report 2009-2010*.

¹⁸⁷ One GRAD teacher explained the rationale behind the “facilitator” job title: “We were told that to facilitate is better [than] if we [just] teach. It’s more or less just starting the conversation, back up, and let them grasp it....The less you talk, the more they learn” (J.E., personal conversation, January 11, 2012). Another added that the role of facilitator is “to help [the offenders] to help themselves” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

¹⁸⁸ GRAD offenders at the Ellis Unit receive 240 hours of cognitive intervention – Ramsey Unit offenders complete 180 hours (i.e., three-hour classes for 60 days [M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012]) – because their Phase II is longer than that at Ramsey (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

throughout the prison system (Windham School District, 2011, "Annual performance report 2009-2010"); however, the traditional 60-day class (three hours per day) for general population offenders has been expanded to meet the needs of Phase II for GRAD participants. The program gives offenders the tools to "develop skills in...[p]ersonal accountability and responsibility; [a]nger management; [i]mpulse control; [o]vercoming criminal thinking; [c]reating positive attitudes and beliefs; and [s]etting goals" (Windham School District, 2011, "Annual performance report 2009-2010," p. 6). Cognitive intervention, according to one GRAD teacher, is

a program that is set up to help the students – and it's in [general] population also; it's not just a GRAD thing – it's set up to help the students identify their thoughts and feelings and relating that to their behavior, because we do things and we act on things that we believe in....The point to cognitive is does it meet your needs over time? ...[They] have to start looking long-range and not for the immediate, instant gratification....So the program is to set in their head their behavior, where it's taking them, and how they correct it so that they're successful (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Offenders learn to challenge the dysfunctional attitudes and beliefs that were a part of their criminal thinking and lifestyle and replace them with more prosocial thoughts. (Those who successfully complete the GRAD process and show correctional staff they are using what they learned in the classes may be eligible to be trained as inmate/teacher aides to assist future GRAD groups, thus providing the inmate aides with a new self-concept – that of mentor instead of *tormentor*.)

The WSD and TDCJ have opted for an educational approach to its cognitive skills program, as the program can reach more offenders in a shorter

period of time in an educational setting. As one counselor explained, GRAD differs from other prison treatment programs designed to prepare TDCJ inmates for release back into the community; that is, those programs and therapeutic communities

have a lot more counselors. They spend a lot more time with [the offenders]. They give them a treatment plan. We don't have anything like that here. We're just giving them strictly education....All I'm doing is giving them education just to get them to general population so they can learn how to work, so they can have opportunity to go to school, so they can get off the taxpayer roll, [and] start earning" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Phase II Curriculum: Substance Abuse Education, Anger Management Skills, and the Criminal Addictive Behavior Cycle

Along with cognitive intervention, Phase II offenders tally a minimum of 68 hours' worth of substance abuse and anger management skills training (TDCJ, "Security threat group management office") led by GRAD counselors, all of whom are employed by TDCJ. All offenders are taught substance abuse education, and if an offender denies having used drugs, the curriculum can be reframed to the "criminal addictive behavior cycle," so they can understand how substances, whether used or not, still enabled their life of crime. One counselor noted that "we have more criminal element in GRAD than we do addiction or addicts" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012). The focus is on the connection between the two: "The criminal personality and the substance abuse user, they all have the same thinking errors, and some of them have a tendency more so when they use; it complements their criminality" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Anger management consists of 40 lessons that focus on choices and consequences, complementary concepts to cognitive intervention:

Our whole program for anger management is about choices. It's nothing but choices...."You've never done anything wrong. You've just made some choices. And there's consequences behind every choice. Some choices meet your needs over time; some choices don't meet your needs over time. As you get tied up emotionally, you don't have any choices. And the only choice you have is not meeting your needs over time. And I know that because you're in prison and I'm looking at you." Pretty simple to figure out. And they understand that (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Supplementing the standard curriculum with his own ideas, one counselor offers the offenders a turn-by-turn roadmap for "removing all the faulty programming therein, and replacing the existing faulty programming with programming that will meet their needs over time" (Peterson, 2011). For example,

The first part of it has to do with getting in touch with your emotional state. The second part has to do with actually kind of the speed bumps. "Here's your problem. Here's what's getting ready to stop you from solving the problem. And then here is what you need to learn to solve the problem." So you gotta convince them they have a problem. Then we gotta teach them why they are going to have a hard time fixing the problem. And then you start teaching them how to fix the problem. And then you gotta, also in the process, you gotta teach them how to get over the speed bump. So that's how you do it. Or in my head that's how I do it. So I wrote a curriculum. And in order to do that you gotta know yourself. So the whole curriculum is based on yourself. All that we do is teach you about you (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Curriculum Influx: Movies, Role Plays and Journals, Oh My

The GRAD process remains an experiment in transition. The process and its components are routinely tweaked to meet the needs of the agency and participants. The current curriculum is augmented with group activities and role plays to allow the offenders to practice the lessons taught in a safe

environment.¹⁸⁹ For example, “chaplaincy movies...with very positive messages and very positive ways to look at how to live life and how to view things” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012) are incorporated, as the teachers and counselors use videos and television not as a babysitter or prison management strategy, but as a “good teaching tool. It’s a good socialization tool. If you can get them to look beyond the entertainment value and say, ‘Okay, this is life. This is what life is’” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). Discussions follow so the offenders can understand “how [the movies] connect with real life” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). Films are shown that the offenders “would [never] ever watch” on their own (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012) to represent the concepts taught in class.

A teacher on the Ellis Unit delineated several activities he and his colleagues added, soliciting offender involvement to rewrite portions to increase their relevance to GRAD:

[We] have kind of gotten together and gotten kind of crafty on this thing. I did the board game with my students, which was a really successful thing. We’ve done things called...“bare books.” They’re blank books. You get them to write some kind of positive message, as if they were writing it to someone in the house....It’s kind of cathartic. They get to write down their thoughts, or “This is where I made a mistake,” poetry, whatever. I’ve used that sometimes. Another I do is I have them create their own model, and I tell them that they have to have a starting point and an ending point.

¹⁸⁹ The GRAD curriculum and its components are the same for GRAD offenders who will return to general population or parole to the community. The majority of teachers and counselors interviewed for this study stated that they are unaware of which offenders might parole sooner rather than later; to them, the question of using a different curriculum for possible parolees was a moot point. One teacher recalled that one offender “got out about a week before we finished. I didn’t even know he was paroling. I had no idea” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). And another counselor explained that not knowing an offender’s parole eligibility or status was irrelevant to what he taught because “I prepare them to be themselves. We’re preparing them for life” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

There has to be a belief and an action. So basically, what they're doing is recreating the Franklin [Reality] Model. I try to do some creative things like that. More kind of outside the curriculum. We even design our own role plays. They tell me that the role plays – and they're right – the role plays in the curriculum are outdated; they're 1982 or something. And they're right. So I let them. I'll give them a role play and say, "Here, rewrite this into a modern day role play," and they're really some of the most creative and gifted people you've ever met in that room right there. We've got some of the best artists you'll ever see. So we kind of, again, I'm speaking for the [other teachers], but we kind of roll with the flow and try to be creative and make this enjoyable. Another thing I do is I make every one of them journal every day. Everyone is responsible, and I've got a list on the wall. Today it may be Smith doing a journal, tomorrow it may be Jones, or whoever, and I just make them keep going through, and everybody has to stand up and present (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Admitting to using "75% of the [standard] curriculum," yet supplementing the remaining 25% with "lessons that I see the merit to that I'll bring in or...lessons that I have created myself" (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012), another teacher at the Ramsey Unit has the offenders "give a speech" the last week of class in Phase II to "speak about the lesson that made the most impression on them, and two times out of three it's going to be one of those supplementary lessons" (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Because the cognitive intervention curriculum used is not GRAD- or gang-specific and is the standard fare for all TDCJ inmates who choose to enroll in the course to test their beliefs and confront their thinking errors, some GRAD staff have made a concerted effort to address gang-related issues.

Originally, the [cognitive intervention] program was written for any offender. The only time that I have [gangs] come up is we, actually, every action that you and I take, not just offenders, but any human being takes, is trying to fill a need. And we're taught that we have four needs. So I ask them, "When you joined the gang, what need were you trying to get met?" So they identify. And then the big question is, "How are you getting that

need met now, because you still have it? Was it for love and belonging?" But a big portion of it was to feel important. Joy and fun is a fourth category. The first one is survival. Some of the very young guys at 15 and 16, they join the gang for survival because they were scared to death, and these guys promise that, "I'll watch your back, and nobody's going to hurt you, and just do this for us." Some was to belong to a group; others were to feel important and joy and fun. "Now that you no longer have this connection with your gang, if it was to feel important, how are you feeling important now? Or how are you getting your fun and joy now?" You've got to have an action to replace the action of being in a gang. That's the only time that I bring the gang part into it (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Another teacher uses "journaling" to encourage the offenders to confront that part of their lives:

For instance, I reference gangs a lot when we do our journaling. I give them the freedom....I intentionally direct the journaling conversations toward gang activity, because it's not written in our curriculum. The cognitive curriculum is not a gang curriculum. So it's kind of like teaching. It would be akin to teaching maybe pre-algebra to students who are maybe algebra students. It's close and it's the best we've got and it's the best curriculum I've ever taught in prison. It fits in a roundabout, rough kind of way. But it's not specifically, "Billy Bob's in a gang." [...] In fact, I'll give you my first journal I give them every time. This is my first journal every day. I do the first one. "It's not a gang, it's a game." We spend three hours on that the first day every time I get a new [group] because they'll either take the side of, "Yeah, it's a deadly game, and you can get killed or incarcerated," or they'll take the side that says, "No, it's not a game." Because a game, I looked it up in the dictionary, is fun and there's nothing fun about getting shot and killing people. So that's my jump-start journal from day one, and it works really well (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Phase III

The remaining three months in the process afford even greater movement and programming for those offenders on the path to a gang-free, incarcerated life. They are transitioned into the general population at their respective GRAD

units – Ramsey or Ellis – and are afforded the privileges of other general population inmates (for example, visitation is increased from one visit per weekend while in Phases I and II to regular visitation for general population inmates;¹⁹⁰ phone calls; commissary visits; etc.). GRAD offenders are also offered half-day work assignments, a privilege for which they were ineligible while classified as STG members in segregation, and often work during the summer months when educational classes are not in session. During this time, they may pursue other vocational opportunities available to general population inmates. Phase III represents the “test” to answer their final reintegration questions: “How are you going to handle the next three months? Can you use what you’ve learned? Can you function in population for the next three months before you graduate” (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012)?

Color-Coded Phases: Bands Band Us Together

GRAD offenders also wear colored wristbands during each phase: Phase I offenders don red wristbands, Phase II orange, and Phase III blue. The multi-colored bands make it easier for prison staff to quickly assess the status of the offenders as GRAD participants and, according to one officer, are required only when the offenders are isolated within GRAD (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). When offenders progress to Phase III and move to general population for the remaining three months of the process, pending bed

¹⁹⁰ For complete information on visitation for all TDCJ offenders, including those in GRAD, see TDCJ’s “Offender Rules and Regulations for Visitation” (2008), which is available online at http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/documents/cid/Offender_Rules_and_Regulations_for_Visitation_English.pdf.

availability, the blue band is removed, and they are treated like any other general population offender, “doing what the population does, going out to rec on their own, going out to eat on their own, and different things like that” (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).¹⁹¹ Once they graduate, they are optimistically gang- and band-free.

Target Population

Who’s on First: Release Date, Time in Ad Seg, or Membership Rank

Depending on whom one asks about the target population, one may get several responses, all slightly different. According to one TDCJ employee, the “directive” from former Executive Director Gary Johnson was to first accept those with a two- to three-year projected release date. Therefore, if an offender was in his first years of a 25-year sentence, he most likely would not be selected as a participant. However, not all agreed with this decision, and a former TDCJ employee and program administrator over GRAD, according to an STGMO employee, reportedly preferred admission be on a “first come, first serve basis”: “If an offender decided he wants to disassociate, he should be able to. He shouldn’t have to spend extra time in Ad Seg just because someone else is leaving [first]” (T.G., personal communication, April 8, 2005). Another STGMO

¹⁹¹ A lack of available bed space in general population on the GRAD units may force Phase III offenders to remain on the GRAD wing with Phase II participants. In these cases, Phase III offenders are required to wear the blue band – while within the confines of GRAD – to distinguish them from those in Phase II. One GRAD officer at Ramsey added, “When we move them to general population, we remove the band. We know that you’re GRAD. We don’t need to announce it to general population. We just need to know who’s on wing with the rest of our GRAD offenders...” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

official concurred but explained his preference for offenders who had spent more time in segregation prior to being admitted to GRAD:

We kept and maintained what administration wanted us to do. We looked at the offenders with the most time; we did them. We looked at the offenders with the shortest time; we did them. And we did the first come, first serve. [But] in reality, I did the ones there the longest and who had suffered the most because I felt that group was the one that was going to make it no matter what. If I put the ones they wanted me to put in there, then this wouldn't be as successful as it is now (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

He expounded that the STG member who has spent more time in Ad Seg – not just in prison – has earned the privilege of being in GRAD, as he “has a lot more to lose because he's already lost,” adding, “What better way to teach a kid a lesson than to teach him the lesson” (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007)?

I didn't think we could justify having a guy who's been locked up for 17 years [in segregation] *not* go through GRAD. He's already given up the gang 12 years ago and we still have him back there [in Ad Seg]. I cannot justify that. I can't justify it here. [Points to his heart] So I looked at all those individuals and said, “Give me the ones with the most Ad Seg time,” not the most time in the system, but the ones with the most time in Ad Seg because I felt I could justify that. Then I picked at that number higher than I did the short-wave [those to be released in the near future], parolees, whatever. And I got that number down (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

However, another TDCJ official contends that the process does not favor one type of offender over another, but instead attributes the “trend” of older offenders being more likely to participate to a desire to give up the lifestyle. “It was first come, first serve in the beginning, but we would have people with life sentences going first and someone doing nine months couldn't get in” (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005). So how would they help them reenter?

“We put the guy with nine months ahead of the guy with the life sentence. So the guy with the life sentence moves to the back of the list. [We decided] we needed to come up with a mixture of both” (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005). With a renewed interest in prisoner reentry and an emphasis on the Safe Prisons Act,¹⁹² “[TDCJ] leadership wants to ensure we get guys who are fixing to get out” (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005), regardless of how long they have been incarcerated. One warden at an East Texas unit that receives many GRAD completers argues that admission into GRAD should be based on the offender’s release date. Citing public protection as the system’s ultimate goal, he said he would

hate for a guy to sit in Ad Seg to have renounced, and he gets out in two years, and we didn’t have the opportunity to improve his recidivism, where we took a guy who has 20 more years in and we got him through the program, and he’s going to sit in here [in TDCJ general population] for another 10 years....If a program is inspirational and makes an effect, you want him to have that before he goes back out on the street (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

A prison gang official, however, says that they once tried to place in GRAD those offenders who were going to be released first, but they ended up with too homogeneous of a group of short-timers who bucked up to the correctional staff, taunting that the staff could not do anything to these offenders because home was in sight. It is, therefore, preferable to have a blend of offenders who are soon to be released with those who are newer in the system

¹⁹² As of May 2001, TDCJ was legislatively mandated to create a Safe Prisons Program “for the purpose of preventing and limiting the number of sexual assaults by offenders on offenders” (TDCJ, 2004, “Offender orientation handbook,” p. 26). On an annual basis, TDCJ must report the number of offender-on-offender sexual assaults to the Legislative Budget Board and the Governor (p. 26).

(P.F., personal communication, July 18, 2008). The prison system seeks a balance among GRAD participants and cannot simply choose the next successive 16 or 20 names on the waiting list without giving any thought to how those offenders will affect the dynamic of the group. Some offenders may remain on the waiting list and in Ad Seg beyond the two-year investigation, but that might be a small price to pay for their increased chance of “success” in GRAD and the general population for the duration of their sentence.

Should the process target those long-term offenders who are more entrenched in the gang culture but have an earlier projected release date? Should preference be given to them over a more recently incarcerated offender who is not yet fully committed to the gang culture, despite being a validated member? Or does TDCJ subscribe to the same belief as some of the *veteranos*; that is, the younger members who bring the street gang culture and mentality into the prison gang are harder to contain and train? Past conversations with law enforcement officers reveal prison gang members are targeting younger offenders in county jails who are charged with more serious and violent crimes – with a lengthier sentence held over their heads, they are better candidates for commitment to the cause because they have more years to devote. Carlson (2001) observed that the “‘drive-by shooting mentality’ has moved into the prisons and jails as the young offenders have been convicted of various gang-related offenses” (p. 12), and Hunt et al. (1993) found that this younger “Pepsi Generation” embraces disrespect-your-elders as a core value. The relative restraint with which older prison gang members operate is a foreign concept to younger members who have yet to adapt their street mentality to prison.

Targeting high-ranking members and shot callers relies on the assumption that they are easily and readily identified by prison officials. Not every gang member sentenced to prison inks himself with his ever-changing rank on his forehead. Do officials opt for being ultra-inclusive (to the detriment of those inmates who seek the solace of the gang's version of "protection" and their subsequent mental anguish as a result of years in isolation), or do they watch and wait for leaders to emerge, hopeful they can identify them with a reasonable degree of certainty and then segregate them to protect the greater good? Even if they purposely choose to wait, as officials often must do anyway (in order to collect evidence and determine gang membership and affiliation through decoding correspondence, watch suspected gang members "outed" by other rival suspects, etc.), the bureaucracy leads to in-fighting, which leads to splinter groups and leaders vying for control and power (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

Because the supply of soldiers is greater than the number of high-ranking members – after all, too many supervisors with too few subordinates is a business plan doomed to fail – should the system concentrate on de-gang-ing the high-ranking members who call the shots? Or does administration isolate the soldiers, essentially removing them from the equation so no one remains to carry out the shots called? According to one warden, this might be a viable choice:

So what I try to do is go in and say, "Let's just stop it where it comes," and take away their pawns from them. That's the kicker. We always try to take the leadership away, but if you can take the pawns away from the leadership. Never did a general or a major or whatever they call themselves ever go out and do something; it was always the flunky that they had to do that. So if you can take those guys away from them, they

don't have anybody to lead. They're more puppet shows (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

One paroled STG member, who self-renounced without participating in GRAD, also suggested higher-ranking members be targeted for the process because lower-level members, or soldiers, cannot conduct business or assaults without approval and direction from the leaders (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005).

Targeting the high-ranking leaders for renunciation may work well on paper, especially for those who wax nostalgic for the days when being in the criminal organization meant taking pride in one's culture and heritage, not "flaunt[ing] their business...[and] not [being] disruptive to the operation" (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007), or seeking attention and publicity, as *veteranos* often believe the younger gang members now want. But they may be less inclined to renounce through GRAD and forfeit their identity. One warden cautioned that even

when the leader has fallen out of graces, and there may or may not be a hit put out on him, I haven't seen them ask for renouncement. You'll say, "I haven't seen you active in a while," and they'll say, "I'm not in good graces." But he won't say, "I want out." A little twist on it because you can tell they're somewhat wanting the old way (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

In addition, because the process is strictly voluntary and inmates have to initiate it (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005), a certain level of maturity, coupled with resignation and disillusionment, prompts older STG members to pursue GRAD as a way out. Some who originally joined did so for protection, but as they aged and counted their months and years in segregation, they realized they "no longer needed or wanted the protection" (T.G., personal communication,

April 8, 2005). And for others, family pressure convinces them to renounce. One offender put it simply: “I haven’t heard from my mother in 15 years” (T.G., personal communication, April 8, 2005). Original participants were older and high-ranking members and leaders, but younger members may now opt for renunciation because they “can physically take care of themselves” (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005), and the protection they once coveted, which the gangs offered, may be less appealing. Whether or not older members choose to formally renounce or intentionally loosen their bond with the gang, they may eventually experience an aging-out of the gang after years in segregation. “Mob fatigue,” as one former high-ranking California Mexican Mafia member-turned-informant labeled it, is the sad realization that the thug life has gotten one nowhere, except years heaped upon years in a cinderblock box (Montgomery, 2008, “Gangster confidential: Transcript”).

Complicating the issue of target population is finding the right balance of offenders to participate in each GRAD group. Simply because a handful of offenders is eligible does not implicitly mean that those inmates next in line on the waiting list will make it into the next GRAD group. The gang dynamic may, in some instances, trump the process, and an unwritten formula exists to reach that balance. For example, would a GRAD group have all members from one prison gang, even if the next set of offenders on the waiting list are all from one particular gang? Who then would challenge their beliefs and provide the “unease” and lack of comfort that signifies real change? And would they not be more susceptible to furthering group solidarity and identity? Would they be more resistant to resocialization? Additionally, a group will not be comprised of gangs

that are actively at war; however, members of gangs that are entertaining peace treaties would be in the mix. Also, what if correctional staff receive vetted and corroborated information that members of a particular STG are attempting to infiltrate GRAD? Perhaps they may refuse to send members of that STG to GRAD for a specified period of time, at least until they obtain information to refute the initial scare (P.F., personal communication, 2009).

GRAD Completion Ceremony: Validation for the Newly Ex-Validated

“I value my life. My life has value. I value my family. My family has value.” Is the recitation of this mantra, delivered by an invited speaker at a 2007 Ramsey Unit GRAD graduation, known as a “completion ceremony,” the extent of prison resocialization in TDCJ? Or does it capture what the offenders have been taught during their nine months in the GRAD process?

A certain amount of cheerleading is needed to help sustain the change that began in the cinderblock classroom of the Ramsey Unit, so it is quite fitting that the completion ceremony takes place in what could be a high school gym on any campus, except for the correctional officers peppered throughout, arms folded, industrial fans on high, and radios offering a disembodied voice every now and then.¹⁹³ Even the white noise has white noise.

A few years ago, completion ceremonies at the Ramsey Unit were held in the small visitation room, a one-story building just a short walk from the main

¹⁹³ Completion ceremonies at the Ellis Unit are held in the prison chapel. A greater number of GRAD participants allude to “Jesus Christ,” “God,” and their “savior” during their testimonials than do those offenders in the ceremonies held in the Ramsey Unit’s gymnasium. When questioned if spirituality and religion were incorporated more into the curriculum at the Ellis Unit, a couple prison staff in attendance offered the location – the chapel – and not the curriculum as being the primary reason for the religious references.

prison entrance and watchtower, with a class of 16 offenders graduating at once. Correctional staff, along with a warden or two (or his or her representative) and administrative personnel primarily from Huntsville, sat in the poorly-ventilated room, listening to inmate testimonials about their participation in the process. In GRAD's early years, family was not invited to the ceremony; however, in recent years, at the recommendation of the then-warden at the Ramsey Unit, the ceremonies expanded to accommodate offenders in Phases II and III of the process (so they could see where they would be in a matter of months), family, and the occasional high school criminal justice class on a field trip. Other guests from the community were invited, too, along with keynote speakers for each ceremony.

But the real stories are conveyed through the testimonials of the offenders, all of whom prepare a statement, but not all choose to share. Many admit to their nervousness at having to speak before a crowd (in their view, this is more difficult and anxiety-producing than their past lives committing crimes and shooting off a few rounds), yet others display the charisma that undoubtedly raised their status in their past life as a gang member. Others speak of their decision to renounce as a thoughtful end to a family's encouragement, and some for the joy of hugging a son or daughter for the first time in years. During a ceremony in 2008, one GRAD offender who had been in segregation for several years before committing to renunciation stopped mid-speech to apologize for his strained voice. Another expressed his love to his family who had traveled a great distance not only to see him physically walk across the dais and accept his "completion certificate," but also to be with him throughout his sentence. When

tears forced a pause before a final “thank you,” a woman in an uncomfortable folding metal chair yelled out, “I love you!” to which the offender responded, “I love you, too, Mom,” and he walked off the stage and back to his seat, greeted by handshakes and the occasional hug from fellow group mates. Several lamented not being the sons their parents had hoped for, but optimistically vowed to be better men now that they had the “tools.” One offender implored that “we are teachable,” and another addressed the Phase II and III offenders seated on the right side of the gym. (These offenders are currently participating in the process and, in the past, were invited to the completion ceremony. During a Ramsey Unit completion ceremony in January 2012, they were noticeably absent and no longer observe the ceremonies.) He recalled when he was in the final phases and dubiously watched ex-gang member after ex-gang member trek to the podium, adjust the microphone, and express his gratitude (or lobby a complaint against the system, as one or two may do now and again), he and his peers would return to their GRAD unit and talk about what “babies” those GRAD completers¹⁹⁴ were, standing up on stage, crying, thanking the correctional staff, and elevating their teachers and counselors to surrogate mom and dad status. And here he was, an official ex-prison gang member in the eyes of the prison

¹⁹⁴ The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation refers to its prison gang members who disassociate as “dropouts.” Despite its negative connotation, the “dropout” label is intended to be an affirmation of the decision to renounce a negative lifestyle. On the other hand, gang members who participate in TDCJ’s GRAD process are known as “graduates” or “completers.” According to one former GRAD security staff member, some correctional officers have questioned awarding the graduates certificates of completion. He explained that for many of these offenders, this is the first time they have ever been acknowledged for successfully completing or graduating from anything (Y.O., personal communication, April 20, 2005). The ceremony, like the strengths-based nomenclature, is symbolic of their accomplishments.

system, ready to return to the general population, armed with cognitive intervention and anger management skills – and crying.

Post-GRAD Work: Returning to General Population with an Advanced Prison Education

Prisoner Reentry: Straddling the Fence and Taking the First Step into General Population

“GRAD is saying, ‘This is what a penitentiary *should* be. We’re doing it for your own safety.’ It’s like they went from hell [in Ad Seg] to heaven [in GRAD].”

–P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007

Although it has been at the forefront of the correctional lexicon for several years (Petersilia, 2003), prisoner reentry, commonly defined as “the process of leaving prison or jail and returning to society” (Solomon, Waul, Van Ness & Travis, 2005, p. xii), excludes the transition offenders confined to segregation or other confinement must make upon return to the general prison population. They are not suddenly tossed back into mainstream society (which formal prisoner reentry addresses), but they are merely transferred from one restrictive environment (segregation) to another albeit-less-restrictive one (general population). But how are the transfer and reintegration accomplished for those having spent years in Ad Seg?

Petersilia (2003) enumerates several points to encourage successful reentry back into the community, including the need to “front-load postprison services during the first six months after release” (p. 18). She notes that recidivism data reveal that not only “two thirds of [released prisoners] will eventually be rearrested...[but also] the return to crime happens very quickly” (p. 18). That is, almost one third will be rearrested within the first six months of

release (p. 18). How might this play out for those offenders released from years in Ad Seg to GRAD and then reintegrated into the general population? Might GRAD completers require additional monitoring and services upon release to their new units for the first several months as they readjust?

Where Offenders End Up After GRADuation to Maximize Success

In February 2006, James Byrne testified before the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons that the literature on desistance from crime has identified employment, marriage, military experience, and relocation as key to remaining crime-free upon release from prison (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, 2006, "Addressing violence," p. 74). In the case of GRAD, relocation centers not on free-world communities, but rather on other prison units where offenders' chances at successful reintegration are increased. Offenders who complete GRAD are placed in general population in only a handful of facilities for the first couple of years post-GRAD, typically in prison units that are slower-paced with an older offender population and, therefore, less prone to gang activity; however, they must also meet the unit's criteria (i.e. age, custody level, etc.) (P.F., personal communication, July 6, 2007). This helps ensure a successful transition without the immediate worry of being confronted by the younger and more impulsive offenders looking to make a name for themselves by attacking a gang member, even if he has officially defected from the gang and is no longer seen as a gang member in administration's eyes.

As explained in Chapter 2, James Byrne and Anthony Delgado pointedly testified in 2006 before the Commission that one cannot strip away gang membership without presenting an alternative to replace what has been lost

(Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, 2006, "Addressing violence"). According to an STG official with the Texas prison system, GRAD does just this and returns to each offender a sense of manhood and responsibility:

I'm not teaching them anything different. I'm doing the same thing they've been doing all their lives. I'm letting them feel they're a man again, giving respect, all the things that the gang gave them. I gave them the tools. Other offenders are saying, "I want to be in GRAD"... (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007)

because they see that the "exes" in general population have practiced how to think and respond differently. Participation in GRAD might be one of the few times in prison where gangsters can reap the "rewards" of prison.

GRAD as Management Strategy: Making GRAD Completers Work for TDCJ

One underlying goal of the GRAD process is "to make a better offender, and to fight the gang lifestyle because [TDCJ] will have an offender who will fight *for you* in the fight against gangs" (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007). Overwhelming the general prison population with ex-gang members who assume the role of ambassadors of the anti-STG sentiment provides potential recruits with first-person narratives of wasted lives in segregation. According to a prison gang official in Huntsville,

Through GRAD, if I can get the amount of ex-gang members out there, then when they recruit, they recruit this young man who may or may not have been a gang member out on the street. I'm basing it on the odds. If he was a gang member when out on the streets, then chances are he's going to be a gang member when he comes in here. If he wasn't a gang member when he was out on the street, chances are he's going to have to think about it because it's a new deal for him. But if I show him a bunch of ex-gang members that are *making it out there* [in general population], and

a gang member who's locked up [in Ad Seg]..." (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

The GRAD completers, intentionally or not, become co-conspirators in the prison system's efforts to tackle the gang problem by: (1) renouncing and reintegrating into the general population, and (2) "outing" – deliberately or inadvertently – suspected prison gang members living in the general population who might harass GRAD offenders upon their return to population (P.F., personal communication, March 16, 2007).

The prison system attempts to control its active gangs through managing its former STG members: "The ex has lots to lose in my system. Put the snitch back into the system [and general population], but he's not a snitch by giving up who's a gang member" (P.F., personal communication, March 16, 2007), but rather he is protecting his status in general population. The prison official elaborates: "The reason why you snitch...you're protecting your own, [and not doing it] for 'The Man'....I always get anonymous snitches[, and they snitch] because it's beneficial for [the individual offender] and [his] group" (P.F., personal communication, March 16, 2007). This may be verbal hopscotch, but, as delineated in the convict code, one typically snitches for personal gain at the expense of others, whether he snitches to a police officer with the hope that his willingness to share will be remembered during a future arrest, whether he snitches to receive a lesser sentence, or whether he snitches to a prison official in exchange for a better cell or personal safety. Perhaps snitching in exchange for personal safety is a bit more noble or respected within prison, especially if one is an ex-gang member who does not want to lose the opportunity he has been given through GRAD only to return to Ad Seg – and so he is willing to

inform staff that the harasser is really an active gangster in suspect's clothing. This way, prison staff cannot accuse the ex-gang member of returning to his gang (that is, he does not want the correctional officer to think that the only reason he was targeted by a rival suspected gang member is because he is *still* an active gang member, despite successfully completing the GRAD process). The prison official added that "White gangsters will snitch off Black and Hispanic gangsters in a heartbeat because it's beneficial to [the individual White gang member] and the group. [But] you just do your job" to identify and confirm those suspected gang members whose cover has been blown (P.F., personal communication, March 16, 2007). But as quickly as TDCJ transforms them from active gangsters to exes, it also identifies and validates new members, ensuring the GRAD supply likely will never bottom out.

Unexpected Allies

As Western states in his 2007 introduction to Sykes's *The Society of Captives* (1958), a "sustainable social order cannot be coerced from above, and must instead promote the local sources of social cohesion" (p. xxiii). The GRAD process uses and reforms the "social cohesion" inherent in the gang culture in its efforts to resocialize its offenders – the gangs already have tapped into this, and, arguably, who knows best about loyalty and cohesion than a prison gangster who abides by an oath of "blood in, blood out" – but with the hope of changing it from a perverse to a more functional and prosocial cohesion.

Clemmer, in *The Prison Community* (1940), identified one "basic principle" of social relations in prison: Most relationships tend to hinge on the "impersonal," in both the prison and free worlds. Although individuals do form

close personal attachments, much of their day is spent “touch-and-go” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 85); however, in times of crisis, these same individuals will become a more integrated group and exchange the impersonal for the personal to navigate that event (Clemmer, 1940). The prison system is able to reframe the GRAD experience as a “time of crisis” – an existential crisis – for its offenders who have renounced. They may become a unified group during the nine-month process, but retaining that cohesion upon completion remains to be seen.

This unity is demonstrated when GRAD offenders return to general population, as prison staff have observed. Past conversations with an STG official revealed that the creation of new norms during GRAD has been reinforced upon the offenders’ transfer to the general population. Once on their new units, the exes were not aligning according to race, but were staying with their “GRAD brothers.”¹⁹⁵ For example, ex-Aryan Circle members were not necessarily gravitating toward other ex-Aryan Circle members, but tended to associate with fellow GRAD members who completed the process together, sharing, talking and mentoring one another (in hopefully positive ways) (P.F., personal communication, late 2008). They share a commonality after GRAD just as they did prior to GRAD: the gang life, segregation, renunciation infused with the never-ending threat of death, and now the life of an imprisoned ex-gangster.

¹⁹⁵ As previously mentioned, GRAD completers are usually placed on prison units where they will have a greater chance of success at remaining gang-free. Sometimes a few offenders from each GRAD group will find themselves transferred to the same unit, according to prison staff (P.F., personal communication, late 2008).

Risks to Renunciation

Should Gang Renunciation Programs Be Mandatory?

Renunciation, as previously mentioned, can be a death sentence and paranoia-inducing process. To reduce the possibility of fellow STG members singling out those who decide to renounce, prison administrators may consider making the programs mandatory. This “would alleviate the problem of having STGs know who is going through [the process]...and would make those who are afraid to join GRAD” or another renunciation program for fear of reprisal more willing to participate (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005). So for those who really do want to get out without bloodshed, they can “blame” the agency for forcing them to renounce. It becomes a safety net for those needing to save face and life. But if it is mandatory programming, even if “mandatory” in name only so those offenders who would otherwise be too fearful to enlist would have a chance, would this violate the offender’s right to informed consent and refusal to participate? When the possibility of mandatory participation was posed to a TDCJ official, the idea was greeted with resignation: “If a person is scared [to renounce], he’ll be re-recruited [once he is out] and will fall for it [again]” (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005). A weaker offender, despite completing the program, will presumably remain a weak and susceptible offender, especially if the prison atmosphere does not change. For those who choose to renounce, is the prison system set up to protect them post-GRAD and upon return to general population? And should one have to go through a program to formally renounce? What if an offender is quietly inactive – and still monitored – but he chooses survival? Should there be a specified period of time without

involvement that translates into “non-gang member” status and automatic release into the general population?¹⁹⁶

Within the prison setting, blind trust in fellow offenders and correctional staff is the realm of the naïve and easily exploited. One’s word is a valuable commodity on the street and in prison and often the equivalent of a signed legal document in corporate America, as explained by one Texas gang official:

You can see a guy who’s never touched another man’s hand in a long time to give a handshake, but they know they’re in the penitentiary setting, so they’re not going to want to shake nobody’s hand up in here. It’s the culture of the prison. When you go out there and shake a person’s hand, he knows he’s cutting a deal with you – either they’re betting or you’re doing this – that’s what they understand. But when you go out there and cut them a deal and say, “I’m giving you a chance. You want to take it? It’s going to be between me and you.” Now I put that personal deal with it because they have to know somebody because they can’t trust the system, they don’t trust the teachers, and they’re not going to trust the staff. But [to them] *I’m* this guy who gave them the break. “He’s the one that chose me to come here [to GRAD].” That shows my commitment. Instead of the system saying, “I’m committed to helping you” and the distrust in the big, gigantic system, they get to that *one* person they can focus on and say, “I can’t let that *vato* down, or he ain’t ever going to help me out again” (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007).

Are contracts binding if sealed with a handshake and no formal paperwork?
Prison officials need a safety net to evaluate sincerity. Is formal renunciation the only way, or the best way?

¹⁹⁶ The California prison system, for example, “may...[consider] for ‘inactive’ status” an offender who has had “no documented gang activity for two (2) years,” pursuant to CDCR’s *Department Operations Manual: Section 52070.19.4* (2005, p. 382). If the prison gang investigator reviews the gang member’s status and “[determines]...that the inmate has had no gang activity for a period of six (6) years” (p. 382), the investigator “shall submit a request...to change the inmate’s status to ‘inactive’” (p. 382). After jumping through additional internal agency hoops, the inmate may be “consider[ed]...for placement in a [less restrictive environment than segregation]...for a period of observation” (p. 382). For more detailed information, see CDCR’s *Department Operations Manual* (2005), *Article 22, Section 52070.19.4, “Inactive” Category* (p. 382).

Compromising the Safety of Exes?

The transition from Ad Seg to GRAD to general population manifests itself throughout the process with donning colored bands to signify an offender's status as a GRAD participant. Staff have commented that general population offenders are fully aware of the band's significance; that is, these are GRAD offenders who have renounced – and with its implied snitching – and occupy a lower rung on the inmate hierarchy. General population offenders know these inmates cannot fight or violate any prison rules for the three months they are in Phase III, lest they be removed from the GRAD process and returned to Ad Seg; thus, these GRAD offenders run the risk of becoming prey while in general population. Although the use of bands to mark GRAD status allows for staff tracking with a quick glance, one GRAD officer at the Ellis Unit concurred that the band on the wrist puts a “target on their back”:

To me, my personal opinion, I don't like putting the bands on them because you are putting them out there when you do that. “That's a GRAD inmate. He's wearing an orange band.” If there is any kind of, “I'm going to get that dude when he gets out because he's in GRAD,” you kind of put a target on their back when you do stuff like that. For the most part, [other offenders in general population] know who GRAD inmates are because they see them walking up and down the hallway when we take them to showers or whatever. So they kind of know (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

The prison system has inadvertently “weakened” these offenders in the process of reforming them (P.F., personal communication, late 2009). Once they are returned to the same situation and the larger prison culture, they arrive with a handicap – they are bringing a knife to a gunfight, as other inmates are not playing by the same rules or with the same skills (i.e., cognitive intervention and anger management).

Although not all gang members in prison qualify to participate in the GRAD process, the safety of other gangsters who voluntarily renounce is also a concern for administration. However, the rules of the gangster game mandate certain actions that may be too compelling for some to overcome. One warden relayed the story of an offender belonging to a Midwest-based gang with its own rules and disciplinary process. The offender had violated a gang rule, a breach of conduct that demanded physical punishment. As a result, the offender claimed “life endangerment” and, therefore, in need of protection while incarcerated. After a transfer to another unit, the offender greeted fellow gang members, as gang protocol dictated. The prison then received a call from a state legislator’s office questioning why this offender was not being protected from the gang; the warden characterized the offender as “his own worst enemy,” adding that many gang members in prison

don’t make good decisions...so...you’ve always got to monitor them because their mindset in that gang lifestyle is so much different from ours, where you’ll sit there and say, “Common sense says....” Where our priority levels are different, their priority levels are “I’m dedicated to the gang” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Once again, cultures collide, and brotherhood trumps safety. Inside the walls, denying how one has lived – as a gangster – is a Catch-22.

To Snitch or Not to Snitch: Is That the Question?

While not mandatory for participation in GRAD, becoming an informant is an “eventual part of the process” (P.F., personal communication, April 5, 2005). Although TDCJ tries to collect as much information about the gang’s activities and structure as possible without jeopardizing the offender’s safety, if he refuses

to share details, his place in the GRAD process is still secure, granted he complies with the rules and remains gang-free. Despite the positive spin, according to one ex-gang member who did not participate in GRAD, it is “common knowledge among offenders that it’s a snitch program...[and] a no-win situation” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005). TDCJ, however, distinguishes its process from CDCR’s debriefing process whereby “dropouts” must relinquish secrets and snitch.¹⁹⁷ But giving up information about the gang is one way to assess sincerity, unless the soon-to-be-ex is a “sleeper,” or a gang member who fakes his disassociation to infiltrate the process in order to reach general population and “take care of business.” But if he is indeed a sleeper, then communication among his fellow gang members must be swift and certain. If word of his true mission is not relayed to everyone in the gang, he may end up as an unintended victim.

However, if a prison gang member chooses to testify in court against a fellow member – because it is either the “right” thing to do, or it is the promise of a prosecutor-endorsed, lesser charge and shorter prison sentence – and decides to “snitch,” he may consider that the equivalent of a two-year Disassociation Investigation (P.F., personal communication, late 2006). Snitching in a

¹⁹⁷ Prison gang members in California may formally renounce gang membership through a debriefing process. Debriefing, as outlined in CDCR’s *Departmental Operations Manual* (2005), *Article 22, Section 52070.20*, is “the process by which [a prison gang] investigator determines whether an inmate/parolee (subject) has dropped out of a gang. A subject shall be debriefed only upon his or her request, although staff may ask a subject if he or she wants to debrief. Debriefing shall entail a two-step process that includes an interview phase and an observation phase” (p. 382). For complete information on the debriefing process, including objectives and purpose, see *Article 22, Sections 52070.20 through 52070.20.8.3* (pp. 382-383).

courtroom guarantees immediate ex-gang member status for the offender, as this blatant violation of the inmate (and gang) code carries its own death sentence.

Ad Seg and the Threat of a Return to Solitary as Sufficient Deterrent?

If GRAD offenders were to author agency policy, they might recommend confining each incoming STG member to Ad Seg for at least 90 days “to see what it feels like.” According to a prison gang official, those STG members who have called this concrete box “home” since being validated as a prison gang member and disappeared into confinement “look at these things [like GRAD] as privileges and not a right” (P.F., personal communication, September 28, 2007). This official further argues that “Ad Seg [and not GRAD] took the gangster out of them” (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007), and the threat of a return trip to segregation for GRAD offenders is a primary reason for its effectiveness: “The reason [GRAD] works is *because* of Ad Seg. They’ve gone through the worst. That’s the real deterrent” (P.F., personal communication, July 6, 2007). If that is the case, if the threat of Ad Seg alone is a sufficient deterrent to make them model prisoners and improve their behavior in prison, then why bother with a nine-month process? Do the educational programs, such as cognitive intervention skills and anger management, have a lasting effect on their behavior once they return to general population?

Sykes (1958) addressed the “fact that incentives for the prisoner are almost completely lacking” in prison (p. 29). Although he referenced the ability to work when talking about these incentives, for those offenders confined to Ad Seg, the primary incentive is to be released from solitary. With that accomplishment come the other “privileges” afforded general population inmates.

Inmates in segregation can do the bare minimum – breathe, shower, eat, read – because that is all that is expected to ward off punishment. Sykes understood the “fallacies of coercion” (p. 61) into submission and obedience through violence and threats, and acknowledged a “system of rewards and punishments...from the point of view of the individual who is to be controlled” (p. 50). Sykes explains that the “rewards” offered are all available to the inmate upon his admission to prison; thus, no true “rewards” exist because these privileges, such as visitation and recreation, are available to the inmate when he crosses the prison threshold. He has done nothing to earn them. However, for the inmate in Ad Seg, these are indeed “rewards” and privileges he is not permitted upon admission. In segregation, contact visits, group recreation, and educational and vocational opportunities are not available. Perhaps then, for the segregated inmate, the system of rewards and punishments is a different experience altogether. He begins with the ultimate punishment and, only through compliance and the decision to renounce his gang membership, can he begin to make progress and reap the rewards, thus encouraging compliance and conformity. Are these enough to sustain stability, especially if the greater prison context is guided by coercion? Can GRAD work because the offenders entering the program are already without privilege? What else can be taken away from the man who has nothing?

But Does GRAD Work: The Need for Program Evaluation and GRAD as Management Strategy

Although gang renunciation programs appear sound in theory and on paper, systematic evaluation is necessary to gauge its success – or lack of – and

calculate the risk of harm toward participants and staff. The “implementation of every program should have precisely stated outcomes and a way to assess those outcomes on a regular basis” (Wilson, 2007, p. 5). Sound policy should be based on rigorous evaluation with clearly defined goals. But how should success be defined? What are the goals of renunciation – free up Ad Seg beds for more violent offenders, reduce the need for Ad Seg beds, or move beyond control to rehabilitation and reintegration of gang members? Various stakeholders may seek different program outcomes: Some may define success as remaining gang-free and not being reconfirmed while in prison; or it may be remaining gang-free once released back into the community; or it may even be safely releasing an offender back into general population. Outcomes may be measured simultaneously to address all anticipated effects to determine if renunciation programs are more effective than suppression or segregation alone, but touting the process as “effective” or “successful” requires the qualification: *effective at what?*

In the past, TDCJ has been adamant about labeling GRAD as a “process” (“with programmatic components”) and not a “program” (P.F., personal communication, August 21, 2008). The Rehabilitation Programs Division characterizes it as “halfway between a process and a program” because “programs” require an evaluation component (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005). If it were a program, might a more formal tracking and monitoring mechanism need to be in place to determine its effectiveness, rather than operating under the “implicit assumption that ‘good’ is going to come of it” (Wilson, 2007, p. 5)? Might greater documentation be included in offender files

to illustrate their progress?¹⁹⁸ If it were considered a “program,” would TDCJ have to make it available to all offenders residing in Ad Seg, and not just those classified as STG members? Does TDCJ distance itself from formal evaluation of the process as a whole (as opposed to evaluation of the process’s individual components, such as cognitive intervention) because of an underlying fear that if the process is evaluated and deemed less successful than what anecdotal evidence suggests, its future will be in jeopardy? Semantics aside, a former GRAD captain (retired) at the Ramsey Unit touched on the heart of it: “This is the beginning of a process in life, and it is something that must be practiced to the last breath....It’s a *process* [italics added] that never ends” (TDCJ, 2009, “Texas department of criminal justice offers gang members chance for new life”).

As of February 2012, more than 2,600 offenders had completed the GRAD process and either returned to general population or paroled to the free world. If their release is the sole criterion for “effectiveness,” is that sufficient? One certainly cannot place the entire blame of prison gang activity on the prison system, as recruitment in county jails and escalating gang problems in the broader community must shoulder some of the responsibility. TDCJ and the community inherit each other’s problems, and if one accepts this inextricable link, then “effectiveness” cannot be defined solely by the physical movement of an offender from Point A to Point B, from an Ad Seg box to a general population cell.

¹⁹⁸ Sec. 493.0083, Texas Government Code (Program Evaluation Capability), requires TDCJ to “maintain a *program evaluation capability* [italics added] separate from the programs and services division to determine the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration *programs* [italics added] and services provided to inmates and other offenders under the jurisdiction of the department.”

“Is the program doing no harm?” is one of the first questions that should be asked.¹⁹⁹ Evaluations should not focus only on the individual treatment components and if the programming worsens individual behavior, but if the concept and expectation of formal renunciation (sanctioned by the state) increase the risk of harm and danger to offenders. While wishful thinking and the recitation of positive stories from ex-offenders are intended consequences, it must be determined if the process is safe for those offenders who enlist. To be able to return to an agency director with evidence that the program has done what it set out to do, and done it beyond expectation, would lend credibility and value to the work. Additionally, evaluation may focus on predicting who is more likely to succeed in the program – leader or soldier, elder or youth, the newly-incarcerated or the old-school convict – and focus energy and agency resources on those offenders. Predicting human behavior is a calculated gamble, a cat-and-mouse game of chance and probability, and not everyone will respond. But with an increasing population of newly-confirmed gang members, it is a chance worth taking.

In the past, TDCJ had pronounced the GRAD process an overwhelming success (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005; T.G., personal communication, April 8, 2005), despite the fact that no tracking mechanism or outcome measure had been designed. Limited resources have been cited as

¹⁹⁹ In their evaluation of Project Greenlight, an eight-week, prison-based prisoner reentry program, Wilson and Davis (2006) underscored the importance of conducting outcome assessments for rehabilitative programs, even programs that appear to be “good programs” that intuitively *should* yield positive results. When all was said and done, Project Greenlight, with its program components that have been proven effective at reducing recidivism (i.e., cognitive intervention skills), as implemented, lacked treatment fidelity, which was only one caveat in a list of possible reasons for worse outcomes for offenders who had participated in the program.

one reason for the lack of a formal, agency-wide tracking mechanism; STGMO does not have a “push button” to track them – “we’d have to do research. We do monitor, but we don’t put them on stats” (P.F., personal communication, July 6, 2007). Instead, TDCJ has adopted a reactive approach to evaluation. Several years ago, “[the State Classification Committee]²⁰⁰ always maintained zero offenders returned to gang activity in TDCJ. Probably when an individual has been identified as possibly participating, then they checked to see if [he] was involved [in gangs]. It’s a backwards way of looking at it” (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005).²⁰¹ TDCJ’s STGMO (T.G., personal communication, April 8, 2005) and Rehabilitation Programs Division (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005) have maintained in the past that the agency does not track offenders once they successfully complete GRAD; however, the frontline staff who work with the participants on a daily basis acknowledge that they do monitor the graduates once they return to the general population (Y.O., personal communication, April 20, 2005). Until a formal evaluation component is implemented – and it has been recommended that prison programs in general be subject to external evaluations (Commission on

²⁰⁰ The State Classification Committee (SCC) is one of four TDCJ committees responsible for “determin[ing] an offender’s custody” (TDCJ, 2004, “Offender orientation handbook,” p. 6). The SCC determines an offender’s “initial assignment...to a unit” and “makes final decisions regarding administrative segregation, safekeeping and offenders approved for outside trusty status” (p. 6).

²⁰¹ Data collected for this research revealed that approximately 11-12 offenders who successfully completed the GRAD process since 2000 have been reconfirmed as STG members (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012; GRAD Completion Ceremony, Ellis Unit, January 27, 2012).

Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, 2006, "Addressing violence") – anecdotal evidence remains the only available support for its claims.²⁰²

Program Expansion and Potential Obstacles

"If we're going to embrace the program, embrace it. If we need a thousand beds in that program, then we need a thousand beds."
–Warden S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007

Show Me the Money

In the past, offender demand for a slot in the GRAD process often surpassed the number of available beds. In December 2007, 224 offenders (including those in Phase III in general population) were in the program at the Ramsey Unit, but more than 500 were on the waiting list after the initial two-year investigation was completed. To alleviate this, TDCJ expanded the process to the Ellis Unit with its first group of eligible GRAD offenders arriving in October 2008.²⁰³ Now able to accommodate 372 offenders at both units (Ramsey has space for 192 beds, and Ellis 180 beds [Slater, 2011]), demand for participation no longer far exceeds the supply of GRAD beds.²⁰⁴

But are there other factors to consider? One paroled STG member commented that the agency "is working against the GRAD program....They don't

²⁰² In August 2007, an ex-Aryan Circle (AC) member who completed the GRAD process in 2004 and "has the certificate to prove it" (Ramirez, Jr., 2007), was arrested in North Texas with other AC members on engaging in organized criminal activity, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and a parole violation. He and his fellow gang members allegedly went to a house in a northern Dallas suburb "on assignment to kill a high-ranking member who was rumored to be leaving the gang after 18 years" (Ramirez, Jr., 2007). Despite not having a formal tracking system, at the time TDCJ officials stated that this individual was "one of only two people who completed [GRAD] and then went back into a gang" (Ramirez, Jr., 2007).

²⁰³ The first GRAD completion ceremony for the Ellis Unit participants took place in September 2009.

²⁰⁴ According to data from TDCJ's Executive Services, in February 2012, 366 offenders were enrolled in GRAD at both units, with 16 additional offenders waiting to participate after having completed the Disassociation Investigation and meeting all eligibility requirements.

push for it enough. [Prison gangs are] a major issue. [They] have 10,000 [Ad Seg] beds and funding [for Ad Seg], but only have 400 beds for GRAD” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005).²⁰⁵ One warden agrees that the system’s past response to the increased interest in the process has not been quick enough to accommodate those offenders wishing to participate:

We’re hurting ourselves because we’re encouraging these guys to renounce, to set aside their gang stuff, saying, “You do a two-year clear [undergo the two-year investigation prior to admission to GRAD].” And what I was seeing when I was at [a different facility] was...just disinterest in it: “I did my denouncement. I did my two years. I was told I was going to be recommended. It’s *been* two years....I think y’all are just pulling my chain.” So I think we hurt ourselves by not quickly jumping on [it] when a guy has the enthusiasm for it (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Whether overtly connected or not, changes in the STGMO in Huntsville must also be factored into GRAD’s delayed expansion. In May 2004, Salvador “Sammy” Buentello, the system’s leading prison gang expert and then-STGMO director, resigned amid “felony charges of sexually assaulting three of his female employees” and “misdemeanor charges of official oppression in allegedly sexually harassing his female employees” (Sablatura, 2004).²⁰⁶ The STGMO absorbed a public relations hit after his arrest and subsequent plea, and, although GRAD had an extensive waiting list during his tenure, finding such skeletons in his closet undoubtedly affected the role of STGMO and its image within the agency. It may be argued that GRAD’s stalled expansion was a

²⁰⁵ The number of beds referenced was prior to the expansion at the Ellis Unit.

²⁰⁶ According to *The Dallas Morning News*, Buentello has been characterized as both a “self-styled gang expert with a national reputation” and a “relentless [sexual] predator” who “kept his victims [female TDCJ employees] silent by invoking his gang connections and vowing to destroy anyone who filed a complaint” (McGonigle, 2007).

negative reflection on the status of the STGMO and those who worked with the STGs, as one Texas warden explained:

But then when [Buentello's] fall from power happened, then everyone said, "See, that's what you get...power and corrupt[ion]." And then I think they downgraded the position of the STG office in all the eyes of the people out on the units (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Another prison gang official admitted in 2007 that he was "trying to get a certain amount of respectability back to [his STG] officers" (P.F., personal communication, July 30, 2007).

Buentello eventually pleaded guilty in 2006 to five misdemeanor counts of official oppression and one felony count of unlawful restraint and was given five years deferred adjudication probation (Associated Press, 2006, "Former prison official pleads guilty to felony;" McGonigle, 2007).

Organizational Resistance to Change

"I don't want to meet something I don't understand."

—Sheriff Ed Thomas Bell in Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men*

Despite GRAD being agency-blessed, returning prison gang members to general population status after only nine months is not welcomed by all. One official was forthright: "The skeptics are the ones with power" (P.F., personal communication, June 11, 2007). Citing fear of the unknown as the primary reason, he recounted a conversation with administration:

The dynamics of the gang are changing. I once asked [TDCJ Deputy Director] in a meeting if he still believed in "blood in, blood out." [He] said yes. I then asked him if the gangs still believed this, then why did he have 700+ [ex-STG members who had completed GRAD] in his [general prison] population? He told me to shut up. [Laughs] (P.F., personal communication, June 11, 2007).

Just as prison gangs evolve and adapt, so must the prison system. Correctional staff take their lead from administration to implement its vision, and evolution is not only expected but also desirable. A former warden elaborated on this inevitability of change after the building tender system was dismantled:

“The difference between me and some of my colleagues...is that I changed....That’s called survivin’ in the world....Our organization evolved and I simply changed with it, which seems to me to be the only thing that a thinking man would do. It doesn’t have anything to do with loyalty or how I feel about either model of [inmate] control. It’s simply a matter of pragmatism” (Press, 1986).

Employee Attitudes and Expectation of Change

An employee’s personal beliefs about an offender’s inability to change have the potential to undermine the renunciation process. Jaded prison staff may believe hardcore gang members are resistant to rehabilitation and their intentions suspect. Employee attitudes may influence whether or not a program succeeds, expands or fails. William Bratton, former police chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, offered a somewhat dismissive attitude toward gang members and their motivations in an online interview with *Newsweek* in 2007. When pressed to discuss the racially-motivated violence that emanated in the local jail, Bratton replied: “Who the hell could understand gang members? [...] They’re all crazy. Anybody that’s sane and has a sense of values can’t understand them” (Murr, 2007).

Reference group change for the offenders also depends on the external views of the officers. If the system is replete with correctional personnel who adhere to the belief that “once a thug, always a thug,” as one staff member casually commented after a GRAD completion ceremony in 2005, then how can

offenders successfully alter their reference group and self-perception while at the mercy of staff who are responsible for their every need? In a study of correctional officers employed in local and county jails, Farkas (1999) found that, consistent with prior research, older officers and those longest on the job were more supportive of rehabilitative programs than their younger, less experienced counterparts. The study also revealed that officers who worked the evening shifts favored rehabilitative programs. Farkas concluded that these therapeutic programs were viewed as a “necessary...inmate management tool” (p. 504), a tool that was under-utilized in the evening hours when inmates enjoyed less structured time. Perhaps reframing GRAD as a management tool, and not a rehabilitative program or process, is a first step to soliciting the buy-in from the doubters.

At a GRAD completion ceremony in April 2005 at the Ramsey Unit, when graduations were held for a single class (today two classes of offenders participate in one ceremony) and in a small room reserved for contact visitation (and before families were invited), TDCJ officials and GRAD staff offered congratulatory and encouraging words to the newly-labeled ex-gang members. A representative from a local parole office added a few comments, some repetitive sentiments expressed moments earlier by others in attendance, but where others offered additional encouragement, the parole supervisor looked again at the group of offenders and concluded with a dose of cynicism about their sincerity to change: “Well, we’ll see.”

Despite such isolated skepticism, some offenders use their “testimony” time to take the stage and thank not only their families, TDCJ teachers and

counselors (i.e., prison staff whose function is stereotypically to “help” and not “guard”), but also the correctional staff, notably the STGMO officials, and the GRAD captain, lieutenant and sergeants. Where within the prison system, as offenders operate under and abide by the inmate code, would it be acceptable for so many to verbalize their gratitude to their keepers? Certainly many offenders retell engaging stories of the first time they entered the units to begin GRAD and met face-to-face with the captain, or how the sergeant or lieutenant responded to inmate bravado without resorting to excessive use of force or other oppressive behavior that might land an officer’s name in a local newspaper, let alone in an internal report that lands on a warden’s desk. But these anecdotes, at least within the promising and uplifting atmosphere of a completion ceremony, challenge the inmate code’s creed that correctional officers are neither human nor humane. As a complement to the completers’ changing perceptions of staff, GRAD correctional officers clap with each testimonial, a simple gesture that blurs the line between how the prison culture tells them they *should* act toward inmates and how they respond as agents of change and witnesses of offender transformation, while other officers not assigned to GRAD stand expressionless, arms folded, surveying. Are GRAD officers seen as traitors and outsiders who encourage these “primary relationships” with offenders, as Galtung (1958) explained was one necessary piece to the resocialization puzzle? Through GRAD, offenders establish relationships with not only their fellow group mates, but also staff who showed they “gave a damn” about each offender and saw each as something other than a “convict.”

Curious to see how GRAD offenders were faring in population and if they had retained the skills taught in GRAD, STG staff interviewed select offenders who had completed the process in the early- and mid-2000s. An STGMO official concluded that the “smarter offenders” – those who were more articulate and possessed a “bigger vocabulary” – said it was the programmatic components that led to their change, emphasizing the cognitive intervention and anger management skills they continue to use. They grasped the content but remained aloof. The “not-so-smart offenders” – those for whom verbalization does not come easy – gave a nod to the staff who made the process worthwhile (i.e., “the teachers, the captain, etc. who listened to me”) and focused on building relationships (P.F., personal communication, January 31, 2007). If the relationships fostered with the teachers, counselors and correctional staff are more important than the skills learned, or at least equal in value, in effecting change for certain types of offenders, can this be replicated within the prison setting where each player has his or her own culture and niche? Prison dehumanizes, and GRAD aims to humanize. GRAD participants form bonds with the GRAD correctional staff – bonds that clearly violate the convict code and decrease the social distance between the groups – and then they are thrown back into general population with other correctional staff and inmates who do not play by the GRAD rules. Where the STGMO wishes to overwhelm general population with exes, can the same be done with correctional staff who cycle through GRAD and later transfer to other units, taking with them a new approach to interacting with all inmates?

Improved Employee Training

According to one ex-STG member, prison officials can lessen the stigma of renunciation and the potential for retaliation by making the process more discreet. This offender explained that the Gang Intelligence (GI) officer often approached inmates in their cells with GRAD paperwork in hand to initiate the process, in full view of other offenders in Ad Seg: “Texas has a big system, but everyone knows you. You can’t hide. Would it kill TDCJ to do it on the down-low?” Interested offenders could “sign up on paper,” drop their request in the mailbox, and then an officer other than the GI could “come to the door and say we’re going to Medical [so you can] talk to the GI in private.” Admittedly “a little out of the way” (A.O., personal communication, April 28, 2005), the process may ultimately be safer for inmates.

A representative in TDCJ’s STGMO agrees that the initiation process could be more subtle. One method he used whenever needing to speak with a gang member who was fearful of being seen with the GI was to assign the offender an identifying symbol so the offender’s name would never appear on paper, lest the paper fall into the wrong hands. He acknowledged “being discreet” is not something that happens across the board and may be the result of an officer’s inexperience (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005). Additional training for all correctional officers may rectify this.

Training is not only for correctional staff, but also for gang-involved offenders. As a result of the *Castillo v. Alameida* settlement, CDCR “must consider developing a training and informational video for prisoners on gang diversion topics” (Carbone, 2005). Such an idea could easily be duplicated in

other agencies and could address topics of concern to specific jurisdictions. The Massachusetts Department of Corrections created a video for offenders that chronicled “a day in the life” of an STG member – showers, recreation in a cage, lack of contact visits, etc. (National Institute of Corrections, 2000). Texas might be able to produce a similar video for all offenders at orientation that would provide an alternate glimpse into the propaganda-ed “glamorous life” of an STG member. Similarly, new offender orientation should progress beyond distributing a lengthy manual to each inmate to read and memorize. Perhaps all STG offenders in segregation could receive “refresher” information about the GRAD process on an annual basis, or this information could be publicized and featured regularly in *The Echo*, the prison newspaper, which is made available to all inmates. By spreading the word systematically and system-wide to the interested and non-interested alike, offenders could feel that the introduction to GRAD was “on the down low.”

Overcoming Skepticism and Battling the Demon Within: Administrative Culture and Its Effect on GRAD's Longevity

Overcoming wardens' perceptions of offenders that “they're still gangsters” (P.F., personal communication, April 10, 2007) is an uphill battle. How does GRAD thrive in a culture where a criminal is still viewed as a “contaminated man” (Sykes, 1958, p. 15)? According to an STGMO administrator, “Wardens have different philosophies. They want to lock [STG members] all up” (P.F., personal communication, April 10, 2007) and are not keen on having them double-celled or enjoying the additional freedom to come and go from their cells (but remain on the wing) while in GRAD. Understandably their fears are not unfounded.

Wardens are held accountable for activity on their units, and if the offender is not sincere in his renunciation, or if he becomes a target of retaliation, then the warden will suffer the consequences.

Similar to the introduction of racial desegregation and in-cell integration before it (as Marquart [2008] notes that prisoners and officers thought it an unwise policy because, among other reasons, “no one had experience” with it [p. 156]), administration’s lack of interest in entertaining a “pre-GRAD” or “quasi-GRAD” concept has the stamp of because-it-has-never-been-done-before all over it, at least according to one warden in East Texas (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). To alleviate some of the problems with unavailable Ad Seg bed space, he once recommended the creation of a “quasi-Ad Seg-type” program where inmates from the same gang could be double-celled in a wing on one of the high-security units. Taking STG members who had been in Ad Seg for at least 10 years without receiving any disciplinary action and who had “earned the right to have a little more movement” (such as being able to watch television in a common area and have group recreation, all being closely monitored), the warden sought to introduce “another category in there” for those awaiting admission to GRAD who would be permitted “a little more interaction.”

Warden S.B.: And I actually recommended that. I wanted to do the pilot program at [another unit] when I was there. I said, “I’ll use my population,” but was told, “No, you’re not going to do that.”

Interviewer (Author): Did they give you a reason?

Warden S.B.: They said, “One, we’re not prepared for that, we’re not set up for that.” Some didn’t have confidence that...we could make it work. They thought that it was such a bold move...because when you get up there [to headquarters in Huntsville], they think they have all the answers.

To me, I think that's a problem. They're only as successful as how we implement what they ask anyway. So it doesn't matter who makes the decision to do that; we implement it and run it. So if that had been their idea, they would've told me to make it work. But since it wasn't their idea....Sometimes it's just opening people's minds up. "That's not the way we've done it." Well, I could understand it if we didn't have 600 backlogged beds, but we've got 600 backlogged beds... (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).²⁰⁷

Agency resistance to change, clearly illustrated.

If the units tagged as GRAD units, or the units to which GRAD completers are sent, are overseen by wardens who are unwavering in their belief that once-a-gangster-always-a-gangster, or who see the GRAD process as little more than a shell game of moving an STG member from Ad Seg to GRAD and then to a dorm, GRAD may never have an opportunity to flourish and reach its potential. Administration must find a good match, both in facility and physical resources, and the wardens' open-mindedness about the potential for offender change, regardless of the label each inmate has carried with him since admission.

Just Because We Say You Are an Ex-Prison Gang Member Doesn't Make You an Ex-Prisoner

If the convict code and the prison context remain unchanged, the ex-gang member will find himself replaying a similar scenario to prove, subconsciously or deliberately, that he, like his environment, has not changed. A warden explains:

Had it happen before where a guy becomes ex....His explanation was [his former gang associates] didn't know he was ex, and he had to go with the flow and just jumped back in, and they accepted him, and we caught him and reconfirmed him, and he claimed to be ex again, but he went right back to his same old ways. That's like all of our inmates. They go right back to the same social factors. That's the biggest thing about recidivism.

²⁰⁷ The number of "backlogged beds" referenced was prior to GRAD's expansion to the Ellis Unit in 2008.

They're exposed to the very same things and the peer pressure they couldn't fight the first time (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Nine months of GRAD programming and hoped-for internal change may not be sufficient to resist the extreme peer pressure of prison. If the broader community and environment – the general prison population – remain unchanged, it may be as if GRAD had never even happened.

Need for Aftercare In and Out of Prison

Without formal monitoring of GRAD completers, their resolve to remain “gang-free” is tested. No one is monitoring them to be sure they have not returned to the gang life in the free world. Monitoring GRAD completers in the outside community comes with its own burdens, the least of which is an inability to restrict an offender's movement and monitor his every step, phone call, or peer interaction.²⁰⁸ Past conversations with law enforcement attest to the difficulty ex-prison gang members experience in their quest to remain gang-free upon release. Certainly some are law-abiding and have found gainful employment (and it is not uncommon for the STGMO staff to receive phone calls from paroled GRAD participants who want to check in and let them know how they are doing in the free world), but for others, the lure of the criminal subculture and its promise of fast cash are overwhelming. They may not have returned to the gang, but they have returned to crime, for that is what they know.

²⁰⁸ For the purposes of this research, though, the focus remains on monitoring former prison gang members once transferred to the general prison population.

GRAD and the Parole-Bound: Expansion to Parole?

How can parole assist to ensure their safety while on supervision? If an STG member is bound for parole anyway, why place him at greater risk by having him go through GRAD? A prison gang official explains: “GRAD will just increase his chances of parole. That’s one plus to it. [For example,] if you’ve got a five-year sentence, you can have two years to be a gangster, three to renounce and get paroled, and [then] hit the streets as a non-gangster” (P.F., personal communication, January 5, 2007). Modeling aftercare for paroled GRAD completers after that which is available for Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) offenders might be one way to begin the tracking and evaluation of exes in the free world.²⁰⁹

Establish Gang-Free Units

If mandatory participation in GRAD is not feasible or desirable, perhaps the creation of a gang-free unit is.²¹⁰ TDCJ acknowledges filling up units with

²⁰⁹ The Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, or SVORI, was a three-year, federally-funded program implemented at the Estelle Unit in Huntsville, Texas, in 2004 (TDCJ, 2004, “Pre-release program first of its kind in nation”). Available to Ad Seg inmates meeting specific criteria (i.e., the offender must be: within six months of release and slated for at least 12 months of parole supervision [According to TDCJ’s public Web site on SVORI accessed in October 2012, the offender now must have at least 10 months to serve before being released; however, eligibility requirements enumerated in a TDCJ 2011 quarterly newsletter increased it to one year prior to release (May, 2011).]; be an Ad Seg Security Detention Level 1 offender and under the age of 36; and released to Bexar, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Nueces, Tarrant or Travis Counties [SVORI, “2006 SVORI program director survey program profile”]), the program’s goal is to “reduce recidivism by better preparing and assisting offenders confined to administrative segregation to successfully reenter their communities” (TDCJ SVORI Fact Sheet). For more information about SVORI in TDCJ, visit http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/rpd/rpd_svori.html. For more information about SVORI, including site evaluations, visit its Web site at <http://www.svori-evaluation.org/>.

²¹⁰ The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) established a gang-free environment at its Taylorville Correctional Center in 1996 to “eliminate gang members, gang structures, and gang activity” (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 1999). The minimum-security facility only accepted those inmates who claimed no gang affiliation and provided programming geared toward “lifestyle redirection.” A five-month evaluation concluded that Taylorville met its mission of

former gangsters is a “slow and long process” (P.F., personal communication, May 6, 2005), but not an impossibility. If, as one TDCJ official proposes, prison dorms can be overpopulated with ex-prison gang members, can potential victims fully be removed from the equation? Will the system eventually face a similar problem as it currently faces, only with different players? The “Sensitive Needs Yards” in California’s prison system, as referenced earlier, continue to see the formation of new gangs – often comprised of its own “dropouts” – to exploit the weakest of the weak in a static prison culture. Will the nature of prison culture eventually transform them back into predators?

Even if a gang-free unit is not practical, it may be possible to incorporate some of the ideas suggested by one warden to create a “quasi-GRAD” or “pre-GRAD” wing. On the type of offender who would be eligible for transfer to such a wing, the warden explained:

If he doesn’t renounce and he’s doing a life sentence, that cell’s all he’s going to know. There’s no outlet for him. My proposal was either on two fronts: You know you’re a gang member, you’re not going to renounce, but reward yourself by staying out of trouble and not involving yourself in a disruption, and reward yourself by going to a quasi-Ad Seg environment, or just doing the pre-GRAD to see how they’re going to manage themselves...to give them some incentive to get out and about. I’m not advocating that we take an entire wing and make them all Mexican Mafia, because I think that’s the wrong message. You’d have different inmates in different gangs to make them get along in there with others; you do frequent shakedowns. I think you’d have to have almost a paranoid edge, if you heard something or thought something was going to happen, you’d

creating a safe and gang-free environment; however, the four months the facility was given to morph into a gang-free zone was not adequate time to prepare for other issues that arose (i.e., educational opportunities were not as abundant at Taylorville as they were at other IDOC prisons) (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 1999).

have to act on it pretty quick. But...you identify these guys to have the potential. I think what happens, if you take these guys that are 40-years-old, 50-years-old, they're going to make it work. They're not going to want to waste away in a cell. I don't think you could take a youthful offender and put him in there. We have that Youthful Offender Program in [another facility], and that is the most violent group of inmates in the whole state (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Wheeler (1961) outlined the conflict for inmates who eventually will have to choose conforming to staff expectations and maintaining friendships and ties to fellow inmates, both of which influence the degree and speed of being prisonized. He suggested that "the dominant tendency is to move in the direction of non-conformity [to staff rules and regulations] rather than isolation [by severing those ties with fellow inmates who are highly involved in the prisoner community]" (p. 704). If GRAD offenders move toward conformity during their nine months in GRAD, as there is no other way to thwart a return to segregation, and are then separated from their fellow group mates upon completing the process, have they internalized enough of the "conformity" to continue it alone on their new dorms? Mental strength may not be sufficient when immersed in a general population that operates under the traditional prison culture. TDCJ chooses to send these exes to select facilities; however, even if this new atmosphere is not conducive to gang activity or recruitment, are its inhabitants still susceptible to prisonization? How might they be inoculated from the effects of prisonization, if that is even possible? Is a commitment to continue the classes offered through GRAD, coupled with a newfound decrease in social distance between offenders and staff on those dorms, a partial answer?

Wheeler (1961) also found that "both the speed and degree of prisonization are a function of informal inmate involvement" (p. 703); that is,

those inmates who have formed closer associations with fellow inmates are more likely to subscribe to the prisoners' community and be more (and more quickly) susceptible to prisonization. It can be argued then that GRAD completers, if they have spent the past nine months establishing a similar bond to their fellow exes, will subscribe to this new "de-gangsterization" process, but they may only remain immersed in this if they can all stay together – and veer away from the other culture prison offers.

SUMMARY

This chapter unearthed the GRAD process, from the offender's initial steps toward renunciation and voluntary participation to the three phases and, finally, to his anticipated transformation from prison gangster to general population offender. Also presented were the inherent risks in disassociation and the need for the prison system to invest in a formal evaluation of the process. The chapter concluded with potential barriers to program expansion and the optimistic possibility of creating future prison units filled with inmates transformed.

Questions, however, remain: Are the offenders mentally strong enough, once out of the relative safety of GRAD and delivered back to a general population that still subscribes to the inmate social system and convict code, to continue this introspection and abstinence from all things gang-related? Can prison gang members peel away the layers during a nine-month process and internalize the norms and values of mainstream society even if they remain institutionalized in general population? This study does not seek to answer if TDCJ's renunciation process *works*, or even if it is effective at preventing former

prison gang members from ever engaging or participating in gang life post-GRAD, but rather it is a case study examining resocialization, changing norms, and proposing why administration would even expect such a process to be successful inside the prison walls. The methodological roadmap and data analysis plan to address the aforementioned questions will be presented in the chapter to follow.

Chapter 4: Methods and Data Collection

This chapter addresses conducting research in prisons with its inherent and unique obstacles, and presents the case study design, including the data collection, data analysis plan, and limitations to the study. As explained in the previous chapters, this study is not an examination of the efficacy or effectiveness of the GRAD process, but instead, it is a descriptive and exploratory case study on the resocialization of prison gang members inside the prison walls. Based on what is known about prisonization, resocialization and the interplay among the various cultures presented, why should the GRAD process be expected to extract the prison gang culture from an individual in a mere nine months? What forces are at work leading prison officials to believe it should be effective, and how do correctional staff respond to these “repaired” gangsters? Once this is better understood, and GRAD is rooted in theory, then sound decisions can be made regarding agency commitment, its potential for expansion and likely durability in prison, and, upon release, the safety of the offenders it seeks to change.

THE PRISON SETTING: DOING TIME AND DOING RESEARCH

Getting into prison can be a fairly straightforward and linear process: Break the law, get arrested, accept a plea, or *be* guilty but deny that guilt, and get sentenced after a trial. All along the way, the suspect has help in reaching the inside of a prison facility, whether that help is comradely (perhaps an accomplice or co-conspirator who takes the tandem fall with the suspect) or adversarial (police and prosecutors). But for the researcher who chooses to undertake research in a prison, this process is not so simple. Certainly for those associated

with or employed by a prison system, the path may be strewn with fewer hurdles, but for the outside investigator armed with notepad and questions, the obstacles increase and, when the research involves prison gangs, they may increase exponentially. Fong and Buentello (1991), and cited by Wood and Adler (2001) in their study examining the presence of gang members and level of activity in English and Welsh prisons, address these problems inherent in conducting prison gang research, including a lack of formal and standardized intelligence-gathering mechanisms to track activity, prison administration's "reluctance" (Wood & Adler, 2001, p. 170) to allow researchers access, and prison gang "code[s] of secrecy" (Wood & Adler, 2001, p. 170) that do not permit researchers to enter their world. Publicity is not the prison gangs' friend, unless it is garnered on *their* terms to serve *their* purpose.

GAINING ACCESS: IF YOU LET ME IN, WILL YOU PROMISE TO LET ME OUT?

Gaining access to this environment is not easy for people who are not part of the prison fraternity.

—Stephan Kirby, 2007, p. 56

My affiliation with TDCJ over the past several years has been a professional one. Relationships were steadily cultivated over the years, a professional give-and-take of mutual assistance and friendly debate. As the adage says, one cannot begin building a relationship the day it is needed; it is a process that is tempered by trust, respect for the work, and a tenacity to continually prove oneself, to show that one can indeed "hang." It depends upon the power of the personal to create positive working relationships at the individual level. Kirby (2007), in his article on "experiential awareness" and gaining access to prison units in the United Kingdom, emphasizes the importance of being able

to “talk the talk” and “walk the walk” (p. 60) and possessing an awareness of “the internal politics, processes and security issues” (p. 60) when conducting such research. The researcher has to be somewhat assimilated to be let in, and appear comfortable enough with the environment and correctional staff so he or she will not need to be babysat – or repeatedly tested as a rite of passage – yet also must balance being steadfast and unwavering in the interpretation of the data – listening to the data, even if the researcher’s conclusions are counter to what staff hope to hear. Establishing rapport and building trust are integral to qualitative research – and especially in prison research (Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti & Santos, 2005).²¹¹

OBSTACLES TO PRISON RESEARCH

Revealing a social work researcher’s educational and professional orientation (“Hey, correctional staff, I’m a social worker!”) is not always conducive when undertaking a study about prison life. This in no way implies that lying – outright or by omission – is necessary or acceptable, but being an outside social work researcher in an inside prison world sometimes requires adherence to the unspoken policy: Do not deny, but do not tell. As stated in Chapter 2, McCorkle and Korn (1954) presented the correctional officer’s “definition of the therapist as an enemy of discipline” (p. 98) and the “therapist’s conception of the [officer] as an obstructor of treatment” (p. 98). Introducing at the outset one’s social work status, often seen as interchangeable with the label of “therapist,” may put

²¹¹ Mary Bosworth is an assistant professor of sociology at Wesleyan University and collaborated with the four co-authors listed, all of whom are inmates who participated in Bosworth’s 2002 book, *The U.S. Federal Prison System*.

oneself two steps back before even entering the front gate.²¹² Sykes (1958), while conducting his exploratory study of a maximum security prison, noted that one of the main barriers to studying prisons and prisoners was being cast as the “intruder” (p. xxxviii), but after returning day after day, he eventually was reclassified as “a more or less neutral figure” (p. xxxviii). My professional work with the STGMO over the past 11 years has tramped down the “intruder” status to a certain degree; therefore, I have access to staff based on my professional role – yet it has not been a guarded secret for the past few years that I am also a student and conscientious observer. I will always be a true outsider because my employment does not bear the stamp of TDCJ or the STGMO, but I am an outsider with occasional insider privileges. I do not take this acceptance lightly or for granted; it was earned and shall be respected. My professional relationships with the subjects allowed me passage into their world long before embarking on this dissertation, and long before they and I knew this research would exist. However, as will be addressed later, this presents its own challenges and caveats.

Patenaude (2004) acknowledges the roadblocks to conducting research in prison, from research agenda sabotage on the part of staff or inmates, to the internal and external review board processes. He advises the researcher “involve the practitioner as a contributing stakeholder in the research endeavor”

²¹² Kirby (2007), in his article on “experiential alertness” in prison research, made an informed decision not to reveal his background (psychiatric nursing) to the inmates he interviewed, explaining that this “gentle form of subterfuge” (p. 61) was agreed upon by both researcher and staff, as it was irrelevant to conducting his research. In my case, the majority of participants in this study have met me through my professional employment, and, over the years, many have learned of my professional and educational background, including my social worker status. A lack of subterfuge, gentle or otherwise, was a foregone conclusion.

(p. 74S). I optimistically believe that this chasm has been bridged, as I have been in consistent contact via phone, email and on-site visits with the STGMO personnel and have discussed the GRAD process and its potential, including the need for a systematic evaluation, before selecting it as a topic of protracted study. (TDCJ does have a university literally in its own backyard – Sam Houston State University – so the prison system is habituated to being the site and subject of research.) Correctional staff have become somewhat accustomed to my presence at GRAD completion ceremonies over the past several years, where, as was my tradition, I took my end seat in the very back row and tried to remain as inconspicuous as possible. From there, I was able to venture onto the units, accompanied by correctional staff, observe a class or two, mingle with the teachers, officers and occasional offender – to see and be seen without an agenda.

BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING IN PRISON RESEARCH

On the scales of participation, the perceived benefits may not neutralize the obstacles, but they may render them less objectionable. First and foremost, prison research “needs to be pragmatic and policy oriented if it is to be useful to practitioners” (Patenaude, 2004, p. 70S), and “useful” may translate to a willingness to participate. Patenaude (2004) further encourages prison systems to invite a researcher to “conduct research on topics in which they have neither the time nor expertise to explore themselves” (p. 75S). The STGMO is a comparatively small operation with each employee already assigned major programs of work, thus lacking the time and resources to tackle a systematic review of GRAD. It may culminate in a “symbiotic relationship,” as Moore

(1978) characterized that of inmates and correctional staff (cited by Hunt et al., 1993, p. 400), where the end result is mutually beneficial. The prison system and the researcher, admonishes Patenaude (2004),

must work together to establish a relationship whereby the researcher will present an analysis that is as balanced as possible, gives voice to subordinates and superordinates, and offers realistic policy solutions to practical problems (p. 87S).

Everyone can win, and everyone can go home with a trophy.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED

This exploratory research is a case study about the process of resocializing prison gang members within the prison setting and stripping away the layers of prison gang and street gang cultures prior to their return to the general population. The study aims to identify how the GRAD process extracts gang culture from a gang-involved prisoner, and also seeks to uncover the process of cultural and normative change inside a closed system, primarily through the eyes of staff who interact with “former” STG members on a daily basis – some who present these offenders as evidence of the hardened refusal and inability to “repair” themselves, and others who attest to the offenders’ miraculous changes in behavior and attitude – and how these varied viewpoints influence the renunciation process and its viability.

As presented in Chapter 1, this research will address the following questions:

- (1) What are TDCJ's measures for “effectiveness” and how does it define “success” for GRAD? What are its goals for offenders who complete the GRAD process (i.e., No recidivism? No major disciplinary

infractions once returned to the general population? A commitment to remaining gang-free in prison and the free world)? Based on what is known about prison resocialization, prison culture, gang culture and prison gangs, as well as general theory and findings with regard to socialization, would a process like GRAD even be expected to be effective?

- (2) Are there differences between the types of prison gang members who choose to renounce and those who opt to continue a life in administrative segregation as prison gang members?
- (3) How do the views and perceptions of correctional staff regarding a prison gang member's ability or inability to "repair" himself mitigate the potential success of the GRAD process in the immediate and long-term? How does prison administration view the process of change and resocialization based on their perceptions of prison gangs, and how does this impact the process and its potential for expansion, support and longevity?

OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED: DEVELOPING A LINE OF INQUIRY

As a natural outgrowth of my professional employment – from working closely with prison gang investigators and officials in not only Texas but also California, observing the GRAD process as an invited guest, visiting various prison facilities, and participating in collegial discussions with the STGMO staff and other prison officials – I began to "develop relevant lines of questions" (Yin, 2003, p. 79) through in-depth conversations in early 2007 with a Texas prison warden (S.B.), prison gang official (P.F.) and high-ranking prison gang officer

(W.G.). Information gleaned from these discussions became the precursors for the current research.²¹³ An already-established professional relationship with one of the interviewees (P.F.) led to the interviews with one of his longtime colleagues whom I had met previously at a prison conference (S.B.), and a prison gang officer whom my colleague knew as a thoughtful, conscientious and dedicated employee with vast knowledge and experience on prison gang identification and management (and with whom I was already familiar through my employment) (W.G.). Access at the time was even less problematic, as Mr. P.F. acted as gatekeeper and first contacted Warden S.B. and Officer W.G. to let them know I would be calling on them. Interviews were scheduled and conducted at their facilities in January 2007. During the interviews, I excused myself when necessary (for example, a phone call interrupted the interview with the warden, and Officer W.G. had to assist his officers with an ongoing unit-related issue); however, interruptions were minimal and seamless.

These conversations originally focused on the evolution of STG management policy and what each participant viewed as “working” successfully in the field, along with their presentation of ideas on handling prison gangs if they had free reign to implement their own policies with the benefit of hindsight – prison resocialization as a dissertation topic was not yet a kernel of a thought – but, through these conversations, I learned of their views on where the GRAD

²¹³ Dr. Michael Lauderdale, my dissertation committee chair, conducts state-mandated organizational research with state agencies, including TDCJ, and, additionally, as a teaching activity, has his students visit Texas prisons. Thus, as part of his teaching and research responsibilities, general safety, both physical and ethical, has been and is a continual concern, especially when dealing with prisons. Likewise, I share these concerns and, as explained, did not embark on this study wearing blinders. This research is not independent of ongoing efforts, as I cannot unlearn what I already know from years in the professional arena, but I have used that knowledge and gone forth.

process was and should be going, but obtaining agency buy-in was more elusive. I also was apprised of the physical structure of the buildings (Warden S.B. channeled his inner architect and drew the layout of a pre-*Ruiz* prison facility) and other underlying conditions, early policies, and the prison administration's learning curve that expedited the growth of prison gangs in the mid-1980s. It was a fact-finding mission to gather historical information from personnel who were there from the beginning, before federal oversight, and from those who had worked almost-exclusively with prison gangs from their inception.

WHY A CASE STUDY?

A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13), and seeks to answer “‘how’ or ‘why’ questions” (Yin, 2003, p. 1). The researcher examines a “specific case” (Creswell, 1998, p. 38) to understand it as completely as possible by “investigat[ing] the context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). “[B]ounded by time...and place” (Creswell, 1998, p. 37), and when “contextual materials [are] available” (Creswell, 1998, p. 39), the case study, like other qualitative research traditions, strives for “understanding, rather than prediction or causal inference” (Drisko, 1997, p. 191). The first three chapters of this dissertation already have defined the context for the emergence of prison gangs, the prison administration's response to the violence and STGs, and the introduction of the GRAD process as a counter-response.

The case study, according to Yin (2003), is often “stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods” (p. xiii) and is packaged with a caution:

Do case studies, but do them with the understanding that your methods will be challenged from rational (and irrational) perspectives and that the insights resulting from your case studies may be underappreciated (p. xiii).

It is beyond a data collection technique, such as participant-observation or ethnography (Yin, 2003, p. 11), and is a “comprehensive research strategy” (Yin, 2003, p. 14) in and of itself, beginning with design and data collection and ending with analysis. Applying Yin’s “stereotype” to this current research, the case study is akin to the therapist who “starts where the client is,” and quantitative research methods are matched by the precision, rules and structure that are trademarks of the correctional officers’ role.

For this research, the GRAD process itself is defined as the unit of analysis, and, as Yin (2003) asserts, “specific time boundaries are needed to define the beginning and end of the case” (p. 26). GRAD is examined as a single entity, from inception to its current state.²¹⁴ The rationale for conducting a single-case design²¹⁵ with a single unit of analysis hinges upon the nature of the case to be studied: (1) a “*critical* case in testing a well-formulated theory” (Yin, 2003, p. 40); (2) an “*extreme*” or “*unique*” case (Yin, 2003, p. 40) that occurs so rarely, it is “worth documenting and analyzing” (Yin, 2003, p. 41); (3) a “*representative* or *typical* case...[that] capture[s] the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation” (Yin, 2003, p. 41); (4) a “*revelatory*” case (Yin, 2003,

²¹⁴ Future research may consider following specific GRAD classes through each phase, or describing the process through the lens of the Ramsey and Ellis Units; however, those approaches are beyond the scope of this research in terms of time and resources.

²¹⁵ A multiple-case design is preferable over the single-case design in order to enhance validity, as the “possibility of direct replication...[and] the contexts of the two cases [if doing at least a two-case study as opposed to single-case] are likely to differ to some extent” (Yin, 2003, p. 53). Although the limited scope and resources for the current study preclude employing a multiple-case design, the “revelatory” and “unique” nature of the GRAD process justifies its status as a single-case design.

p. 42) where the researcher “has an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation...even though the problems were common across the country” (Yin, 2003, p. 42); and (5) a “*longitudinal*” case where a single case is examined “at two or more different points in time” (Yin, 2003, p. 42). Examining the GRAD process as a single case falls neatly under the umbrellas of the “revelatory” and the “extreme/unique,” lending itself equally well to the “longitudinal” for future research. The shielded nature of prison gangs renders the phenomenon nearly “inaccessible” to researchers (but apparently not to popular media), despite the proliferation of gangs in federal and state prisons and local county detention facilities (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). The gang problem in the prison setting is common, yet the formalized renunciation process is not. Prisons across the country report problems with gang activity, although the degree varies, and to be able to access one system’s process for advancing beyond segregation – the favored method to control and contain – proves “revelatory.”

DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

One learns not to look for the one, true version; instead, one becomes attuned to contradiction.

—Gresham Sykes, 1958, p. 148

This case study utilized both quantitative and qualitative research methods, with the qualitative building on the descriptive, quantitative data to elicit the meaning behind the numbers. In addition to other sources of data to be discussed later in the chapter, I used extant data from TDCJ to present a broader picture of those STG members who chose to participate in the GRAD process. The culture and behavior of prison gang members who have renounced, along

with the prison system's organizational culture as each responds to and interacts with one another, were examined through the use of qualitative research techniques.

Data Collection

Timeline: Getting In and Getting Out in a Politically Tumultuous Era

Because case studies are rooted in context, it would be remiss to ignore that which surrounded the data collection for this particular study. The 82nd Texas Legislative Session (Regular), which commenced on January 11, 2011, and adjourned on May 30, 2011, was fraught with looming budget cuts to numerous state agencies and potential layoffs for their personnel. The Texas prison system, one of the largest state agencies, was not immune to these proposed cuts, which included the suggested abolition of the Windham School District (WSD) (Ward, 2011, "Senate: Cut \$34 million from prison schools"). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the WSD provides the teachers and curriculum for the cognitive intervention skills classes, one of the staples of the process. Although WSD survived the legislative axe of the last session, it remains to be seen if a process such as GRAD, which reaches only a handful of select segregated offenders, becomes a future political and economic casualty.

It was under this contextual backdrop that data was collected.²¹⁶ In July 2011, the requisite paperwork was submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board for expedited review. (See Appendix D for UT IRB Approval Letter) Upon approval in late August 2011, the paperwork, along with interview

²¹⁶ For a detailed timeline of the Review Board and TDCJ processes and data collection, refer to Appendix C.

questions for staff and specific data to be requested, was advanced to TDCJ's Executive Services for review through its external research review process;²¹⁷ approval was granted in late November 2011. (See Appendix E for TDCJ Research Project Approval Letter)

Participant Selection: The Power of the Personal

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), as cited by Creswell (1998), the recruitment of “backyard” participants (p. 114) – which includes professional colleagues – may pose ethical dilemmas and threaten the validity of a qualitative research design. However, due to feasibility and the difficulty in gaining entrance into the prison system and access to law enforcement, subjects were chosen from a convenience sample in “my professional backyard,” as the participating law enforcement officers and majority of the correctional staff and STG personnel are professional colleagues and are known to have years’ worth of experience working with gang and prison gang members. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, and because the safety and security of prison staff, offenders and facilities are paramount, I employed “purposeful sampling” (Creswell, 1998, p. 110) to select both correctional staff and teachers/counselors to participate. Ultimately, a total of 16 individuals were interviewed: two law enforcement officers, two STGMO staff, six correctional/security staff (four at Ramsey and two at Ellis), three teachers (two at Ramsey and one at Ellis), and three counselors (one at Ramsey and two at Ellis).

²¹⁷ The complete protocol for submitting external research proposals to TDCJ is available on its Web site at http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/faq/faq_external_research.html.

In September 2011, interviews were conducted with two law enforcement officers identified as having expertise in gang investigations and, through the course of their duties, having contact with GRAD completers who since have returned to the free world. I expected these interviews to provide a different perspective on the “effectiveness” of GRAD and the internalization of new values and beliefs once the offenders were no longer sheltered within the confines of prison. After verbal agreements to participate, I emailed each officer the list of interview questions and consent forms prior to our meeting. With the approval of his police chief, Officer D.E. was interviewed at the start of his evening shift in a conference room at his department. Officer I.C.’s interview was conducted in a media room at the UT-Austin School of Social Work’s Learning Resource Center. Each interview lasted approximately an hour.

TDCJ provided points of contact for the STGMO and Ramsey and Ellis Units in November/December 2011; I telephoned each to briefly explain the nature of the study, and, because I did not have a list of all GRAD staff beforehand, nor did I know who would be willing and available to participate, I deferred to the unit contacts to forward my request to their respective staff. I then emailed a list of interview questions and consent forms for their – and staff’s – review so potential participants could prepare in advance, if they so desired.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ I provided each participant with a copy of the interview questions and informed consent prior to the start of the interview, and asked if they knew who I was (UT student) and why I was there (dissertation research about GRAD). The majority admitted they did not, as they had not received copies of the questions or information about the study prior to being directed to the interview location. At one unit, staff were shuttled in, one after another – with only a few minutes break between interviews – with some casually mentioning that they were “told to do this.” I explained that participation was completely voluntary, and even if they chose not to be interviewed, their decision to decline would remain confidential. No one declined.

Interviews with TDCJ staff were conducted at their respective workplaces in order to accommodate their schedules. The Brown Oil Tool building in Huntsville, known as the BOT Complex, is a non-descript warehouse situated beyond a vast parking lot amid scores of pine trees, and is a stone's throw from TDCJ's administrative office building. It houses the STGMO, Classification and Records, Texas Correctional Industries, and various other TDCJ divisions, all compartmentalized in an expansive maze of cubicles. For visitors who pride themselves on their keen sense of direction and ability to recall left and right turns and exit signs, even they run the risk of becoming disoriented, and ending up in the staff breakroom when they swore they were routed to Classification. Male inmates in white prison-issued clothing mill about, seeming to eschew eye contact with non-TDCJ staff, as they tend to their work assignments throughout the complex. Staff voices carry, but conversations across the high-walled cubes are not discernible. It was here at the BOT in early January 2012 that the interviews with two STGMO staff were conducted, participant and researcher seated at a table in the dead end of the STGMO maze, surrounded by metal filing cabinets and pausing for the occasional friendly interruption by TDCJ staff.

Unit interviews were conducted over a four-day period in January 2012. The Ramsey Unit in Rosharon opened in July 1908 and houses approximately 1,500 male offenders. In addition to the standard prison fare of GED preparation, pre-release educational programs, and cognitive intervention classes, the facility also boasts academic programs offered through the University of Houston-Clear

Lake (Bachelor's and Master's level degrees) and Alvin Community College.²¹⁹

The interviews were conducted in a small room lined with bookshelves directly across from a GRAD class in session in the education building, a building that resembles any other school, replete with a stocked library, a principal's office, and inspirational posters adorning the hallway walls.²²⁰

The Ellis Unit, in operation since July 1965, lies several miles north of Huntsville on over 11,000 acres, and can accommodate approximately 2,000 male inmates.²²¹ Interviews were conducted in the GRAD lieutenant's office, adjacent to one of the three partitioned classrooms in the reconverted gymnasium designed specifically for GRAD. Despite the shared wall, the neighboring GRAD class in session – complete with offenders clapping and shuffling chairs – did not interrupt or otherwise impede the interviews.

Interview Protocol: Cross the T and Dot the I

Prior to beginning each interview, the nature of the study was explained, and written informed consent obtained. (See Appendices F and G for the approved Letters for Informed Consent for TDCJ Staff and Law Enforcement Officers, respectively) Participants were advised that they could refuse to answer any question. Also with their permission, each interview was digitally recorded; participants were advised that any digital recordings made would be

²¹⁹ This information is available on TDCJ's public Web site at www.tdcj.state.tx.us/unit_directory/r1.html and was retrieved on September 15, 2012.

²²⁰ For example, one poster depicting a "little hippo" illustrates a lesson taught during the cognitive intervention classes: "When you're in it up to your ears, it pays to keep your mouth shut" (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

²²¹ This information is available on TDCJ's public Web site at www.tdcj.state.tx.us/unit_directory/e.html and was retrieved on September 15, 2012.

destroyed, at the latest, a year after the interview date.²²² To maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, names were not associated with responses, and interviewees were not mentioned by name while being recorded.

Due to the inherent flexibility of qualitative research, questionnaires and surveys were not administered, yet each participant was provided with a copy of the questions and topics prior to the start of the interview. Although the interview instrument was available, it was not strictly adhered to. The fluid and open-ended nature of the semi-structured interview granted each participant an opportunity to address tangential topics, topics that undoubtedly figured later into the analysis and might have been missed otherwise. The following topics were addressed:

- The emergence of STGs and prison gang violence;
- STG management;
- Institutional and administrative perspectives on STG management and the use of Ad Seg;
- Organizational responses to change;
- Prison gang renunciation, including the goals and perceived success of the GRAD process;
- Staff perspectives on the GRAD process;
- Staff perspectives on how they view their and their colleagues' work in GRAD;

²²² I sought permission in writing from the unit warden and/or assistant warden to bring a digital recorder and writing materials onto the units, and provided via email a photograph of the actual recording device.

- Staff perspectives on offender change; and
- Offender reintegration from Ad Seg to the general prison population.

A single interview per participant was conducted, with each lasting between one and two hours. (See Appendices H-K for Interview Topics and Sample Questions) I then adhered to post-interview etiquette and sent thank you letters to all participants and points of contact who assisted along the way, including the prison wardens, Deputy Director of Management Operations, and even the WSD principal who graciously provided accommodations for the Ramsey Unit interviews.

Interviews were transcribed by a professional in the field who was recommended by former UT doctoral students via a university Ph.D. listserv. I spoke with the transcriptionist to ensure he was familiar with and respected the intense need for confidentiality and the core tenet of “Fight Club” as adapted to dissertation research: The first rule of dissertations is do not talk about dissertations. A Non-Disclosure Agreement was signed before recordings were made available for transcription. Once final transcripts were approved, the transcriptionist was advised to delete all digital and text files; written confirmation was received when the purge was complete. My committee chair, Dr. Michael Lauderdale, also secured funding on my behalf from the Austin Police Association to underwrite the costs of the transcription service.

Human Subjects Protection and Anonymity of Participants: Security Is Paramount

All research must hew to human subjects' protection requirements. The prison adage, "Security is never convenient," is for not only inside the walls but also the written word. It is imperative not to divulge the names of individual offenders participating in GRAD or those of correctional staff and other professionals directly involved with the process. Even when participants told me that I could use their real names in this study, I stressed that I would not. The additional steps taken to increase the level of anonymity are minor inconveniences. Because only a handful of correctional staff, counselors and teachers are assigned to GRAD at both the Ramsey and Ellis Units, specific titles and rank of correctional officers are not mentioned to enhance confidentiality.²²³

I will follow Patenaude's (2004) lead, as he

typically attributes quotes to "one correctional officer stated" or "several officers noted that" [...to ensure anonymity of research participants...] even though the...participant may have stated that he or she would have no problem being identified as having made the statement (p. 83S).

²²³ I realize that some GRAD staff were able to discern who was being interviewed; it was impossible to completely and closely guard that information, as staff were aware when one interview finished and another began. Even GRAD offenders at the Ramsey Unit knew that "someone from UT" was talking to their staff – the room where interviews were being conducted was directly across the hall from an occupied GRAD classroom (and one of the participating non-security staff returned after the interview to ask with "which UT campus" I was affiliated, as the students were apparently debating the issue). All conversations and content, however, remained confidential. Within the bubble of GRAD staff who work directly with the offenders, it was not a secret who was interviewed, but this information was never divulged or "assumed" that others, including GRAD and TDCJ administrative staff, had a "right to know" who chose to participate and who did not.

Sources of Evidence

Yin (2003) identified several sources of evidence from which to collect data and increase reliability, some of which have already been incorporated into the previous chapters. A brief summary of the various types follows.²²⁴

Documentation. Yin (2003) forewarns that “every document was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done” (p. 87). Despite a glut of documentation in the prison setting, not all documents were drafted for the researcher’s taking. Some “administrative documents” (p. 86), such as TDCJ’s mission statement, its *Offender Orientation Handbook* (2004), annual reports, and other publications, are publicly available, and, as such, are framed with distinct audiences in mind. Other internal documents, such as the prison’s STG management plan and incident reports, are not available for review. Newspaper and journal articles and other open source records about TDCJ, the GRAD process and prison gangs can and have been reviewed.

Archival Records. Although these records can offer a wealth of information, caution must be used when interpreting for accuracy and intent for which the data was collected (Yin, 2003). I initially requested a limited amount of extant data that was neither offender- nor staff-specific, including, but not limited to, the following categories:

- Administrative segregation population
- Confirmed Security Threat Group population

²²⁴ See Appendix L for Matrix with Research Questions and Sources of Evidence.

- GRAD population statistics, including the number of offenders enrolled at the Ramsey and Ellis Units; the number of offenders who have completed the process since its inception; and the number of offenders removed from the process

Interviews. Interviews, as explained earlier, should be conducted as “guided conversations rather than structured inquiries” (Yin, 2003, p. 89) with open-ended questions to maximize flexibility of thought and response. As with the other types of evidence, interview content should be corroborated with multiple sources of data to combat participants’ “bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation” (Yin, 2003, p. 92).

For some of the interview subjects, I already had a baseline for their points of view on prison gangs and offenders’ ability to change. Informal discussions over the years through my professional experience have afforded me a model for comparison. The necessity of “[s]eeking out, reporting, and weighing contradictory evidence” (Drisko, 1997, p. 189) is crucial to qualitative research – a devil’s advocate as a safeguard to validity. Because I have been around a few of the participants for several years, I am aware of those who do not easily yield the belief that “once a gangster, always a gangster.” Similarly, I am aware of those who once believed this, but after years of working with prison gangs and closely with the GRAD process, have admitted that they have witnessed a

change in the GRAD offenders – from their first days in the prison system to their subsequent segregation and then redemption through GRAD.

Direct Observations. The case study also incorporates “direct observation of the events being studied” (Yin, 2003, p. 8) and is used to fully “[understand] either the context or the phenomenon being studied” (Yin, 2003, p. 93). Impressions of the facilities, observed interactions between both offender and correctional staff and correctional staff and teachers/counselors, and reflections during GRAD completion ceremonies are incorporated. Yin (2003) recommends having more than one observer do the observing to increase reliability; however, because I am the sole researcher, I must rely on other sources of evidence to challenge what I have seen.

Participant-Observation. Per Yin (2003), the “most distinctive opportunity” in a case study is the “ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to scientific investigation” (p. 94), especially research in prisons where transparency is limited. Through immersion, the researcher also gains the “ability to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone [on the ‘inside’]” (Yin, 2003, p. 94). I have been a pseudo-and-not-fully-indoctrinated-participant-observer as a result of my employment that, over several years, has afforded me access to the department. I have quietly observed cognitive intervention classes and completion ceremonies, and, on occasion, have

wandered the GRAD wings with staff to exchange a few words with Phase I and II offenders.

However, with participant-observation come great responsibility, the potential for reactivity, and the “ability to manipulate minor events” (Yin, 2003, p. 94), with the participant-observer’s “participation” duties overshadowing his or her observer status (Yin, 2003, p. 96). Sykes (1958) explains that “in the polarized society of the prison it is extremely difficult not to become partisan, consciously or unconsciously” (p. 148). Despite the imperfection of “participant-observation” as a rigorous methodological tool, it “undoubtedly leads to a far more detailed view of either the captives or the captors than is possible by other means” (p. 148).

Physical Artifacts. More common in anthropological research, physical artifacts, such as “a technological device, a tool or instrument, [or] a work of art” (Yin, 2003, p. 96), also provide context and depth of meaning. The GRAD process, through its curricula and the vision of its teachers and counselors, has incorporated several art projects, group and individual, grand and small, to illustrate the concepts; the offenders’ “works of art” adorn the walls of the classrooms, much like children’s drawings on a proud parent’s refrigerator or office wall. (The teachers have stated in the past that many of these offenders are accomplished artists, whether graffiti or tattoo or more formally trained, and these assignments let them showcase their talents.) For example, a board game

that demystifies the Franklin Reality Model of cognitive restructuring, one component of the cognitive intervention skills curriculum, has been prominently displayed in the Ellis Unit library.

Triangulation: Validation by Triangle

The “development of converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2003, p. 98) that results from collecting data from several of the aforementioned sources renders “any finding or conclusion in a case study...more convincing and accurate” (p. 98). The quality of the case study research design is further strengthened by the use of not only different types of data, but also specific “tactics” to enhance the reliability and validity (Yin, 2003):

(1) Construct Validity. Incorporating “multiple sources of evidence...[,] establish[ing] a chain of evidence...[, and] hav[ing] the draft case study report reviewed by key informants” (Yin, 2003, p. 36) increases construct validity. Creswell (1998), citing Stake (1995), espouses the art of “member checking” – post-data collection – whereby a select number of participants review “rough drafts of writing in which the actions or words of the actor are featured” (p. 213). While I did not have the opportunity to have participants member check and challenge any of the factual information to ensure accuracy and completeness, as Carroll (1999) advises (cited in Patenaude, 2004, p. 76S), I did enlist three individuals – one former TDCJ representative whose previous conversations factor greatly in this study (P.F.) and two law enforcement officers with extensive experience in the criminal justice system, supervising gang investigations and interviewing gang members, including those involved in prison gangs – to review an earlier draft. Ultimately, though, the

interpretation of the data was “mine and mine alone” (Carroll, 1999, pp. xv-xvi, cited in Patenaude, 2004, p. 76S).

(2) External Validity. This is the concept of generalizing one’s findings beyond the individual case study. Yin (2003) clarifies that “in analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (p. 37) and not generalizing a sample to the population, as in inferential statistics. For this particular study, if prison gang members can be resocialized, de-ganged and successfully transferred to general population, can this process be applied beyond the Texas prison system and these sets of gangsters? Does the concept of prison gang resocialization transfer beyond the Ramsey and Ellis Units?

Intertwined with external validity is the concept of transferability, which refers to the “applicability of findings and conclusions derived from one context to a second context” (Leininger, 1994, cited by Drisko, 1997, p. 189). Drisko (1997) comments on the “vivid, moving, and unique portrayals” (p. 189) of qualitative studies, but without the nod to transferability, their limitations and applicability to the real world and real policies, the studies remain just another compelling story that neglects to answer the “so what” question of social work research.

(3) Reliability. With the inclusion of the case study protocol (See Appendix M), other researchers will be privy to a step-by-step guide to how this particular study was conducted. If another researcher undertakes a similar study and adheres to the protocol, he or she should arrive at the same conclusions.

In a researcher's utopia, the aforementioned sources of evidence will be available and the interpretation straightforward; unfortunately caveats exist. For the sole researcher, the expense and time required to travel to the research sites, locate and collect the data, and conduct and transcribe interviews can be daunting. More so, the renaissance researcher must "[master] multiple data collection techniques" (Yin, 2003, p. 100), despite not having had the proper training or opportunity to learn in a controlled setting. Finally, the researcher is often at the mercy of key informants and participants whose responses to initial requests to member check, for instance, may be well-intentioned the day they are asked, but as the days and weeks pass, and life interrupts, so might the initial enthusiasm to review the draft.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Once all data sources were examined and interviews transcribed, I sifted through 430 pages of transcripts (representing 20 hours and 21 minutes of digital recordings) and identified significant statements and patterns. Themes were extracted from each interview and coded during the first stage of analysis. Coding, according to Drisko (1997), "summarizes participants' views and experiences" (p. 190), and "researchers should describe what they include in and exclude from key code" (p. 190). Statements containing elements of more than one theme were added to all relevant themes. Clusters of themes across interviews were identified, noting the relationships among each, and I searched for different sets of themes suggested by the participants. I also culled the general themes presented at the GRAD completion ceremonies I attended during the data collection period (January 25, 2012, at the Ramsey Unit, and January

27, 2012, at the Ellis Unit), such as the offenders' decision to renounce, wisdom gained or lost, and personal transformations, as these are all common themes that have been articulated during past ceremonies, and examined the patterns and relationships among them.

Drisko (1997) presents four criteria for assessing data analysis: (1) "credibility/believability" or "truthfulness" (p. 191, citing Altheide & Johnson, 1994, and Reid, 1994), which demands "extensive reporting of raw data in the form of the participant's own words or the researcher's descriptions of behavior" (p. 192); (2) "placing meanings in context" (p. 192, citing Leininger, 1994, Lincoln & Guba, 1985, and Riessman, 1994), which is not unlike placing the rise of prison gangs within its historical context, or any other bounded system; (3) "confirmability" (p. 192) to "corroborate data and to challenge and/or affirm interpretation or theory" (p. 192, citing Reid, 1994); and (4) "completeness or saturation" (p. 192) as it refers to the "comprehensiveness of both the data collection and analysis" (p. 192).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Although this study is primarily qualitative, quantitative analyses were conducted to enhance the inherent "richness of meaning, depth of understanding, and flexibility" (Patenaude, 2004, p. 70S) of qualitative research. In the following chapter, I present descriptive data for those offenders who completed the GRAD process in January 2012.

LIMITATIONS

Every research presents its own limitations, but minimizing their impact through acknowledgement and rationale can increase its reliability and applicability beyond the study's context.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the “process by which the researcher and the research object (the respondent) mutually and continually affect one another during the course of the research process” (Kirby, 2007, p. 53, citing Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Although it may imply a conceptual limitation to be feared or from which to distance oneself, reflexivity also marks the path and opens the gate, a necessity to conduct prison gang research inside the walls. Because I have a passing familiarity with this specific arena's terminology – and “knowing and using the correct language” enhances “trust” in the researcher (Kirby, 2007, p. 54) – its histories of Texas-based prison gangs and structure (even if the names of specific individuals are elusive and ever-changing), I was able to mingle with correctional staff and engage in informed conversations, even, for example, when an interview veered from a scripted outline.

But being accepted, especially in the field of research, carries its own caveat. Liebling (1999) elaborates that, during her team's research in a maximum security prison in the United Kingdom, prisoners and correctional staff alike “all drew us into their dilemmas, looking for assistance, advice, opinion or just an audience. It was impossible not to ‘return the ball’ on occasion. We

entered our research world and by doing so, inevitably, changed it [italics added]" (p. 156). Over the years, one of the STG officials and I have had a series of fortune-telling discussions about the GRAD process. I have questioned him about its goals, implied and spoken, and delighted in presenting counter-arguments to further the dialogue. I have questioned him about the theory behind the process and the rationale behind the number of offenders in each class. I have questioned how offenders are monitored for gang involvement upon release, and how the prison system intends to guarantee (or maximize) their personal safety upon transfer to the general population. Whether I agreed or disagreed with his responses was less important than the art of the discourse itself; however, by asking about it, I was changing it.

The Data Itself

Because TDCJ data is "operations driven" and research "more historical" (TDCJ Executive Services, personal communication, March 12, 2012), data-keeping is subject to the needs of the agency, and not typically for research purposes outside of TDCJ. I abandoned my initial plans for a more in-depth quantitative analysis because the requested data did not exist in a readily-available or easily-accessible format.²²⁵ For example, when provided the data for

²²⁵ For example, I was advised that data was not available via one central source and would have to be pulled from several. Adding to the difficulty in obtaining quantitative data, the STGMO also calculates figures by calendar year, while executive administration reports them by fiscal year. Also, STGMO data-keeping priorities often changed, depending upon the present-day needs of the agency. Data collected yesterday may not be data needed today.

the offenders who completed GRAD in January 2012,²²⁶ disassociation dates for some were earlier than the dates for placement in Ad Seg.²²⁷ At first glance, this time travel may seem an impossibility (i.e., offenders are placed in Ad Seg upon STG validation, and then they renounce and disassociate in order to get out of segregation); however, it is more likely, according to one TDCJ representative (A.P., personal communication, May 18, 2012) that the offender had been released from TDCJ custody and then returned for a new offense or violation (and so his “Ad Seg Start Date” then would coincide with his new sentence/in-custody date). Some of the data also revealed lapses (months, even years) between the date offenders were confirmed as STG members and when they were finally placed in segregation.²²⁸ When asked if this had to do with the availability of segregation cells at the time, TDCJ explained that “human error” or

²²⁶ The decision was made to modify the initial request for data on all offenders who had completed GRAD since its inception in 2000 and, for the purposes of this study, to only examine data on the Ramsey and Ellis offenders who completed the process in January 2012, the month during which interviews were conducted and completion ceremonies attended.

²²⁷ Some offenders on the TDCJ spreadsheet had a “Disassociation Start Date” (the date they signed renouncement papers and the Disassociation Investigation, or DI, began) that was earlier than their “Ad Seg Start Date” (the date they were placed in Ad Seg as a confirmed STG member). For example, one offender started the disassociation process in July 2004, but his Ad Seg start date was listed as April 2010.

²²⁸ Because the spreadsheet only provided data for their current “in custody” sentence, any attempt to calculate the *cumulative* length of time spent in Ad Seg prior to renunciation is futile – even if offenders had been to prison multiple times and placed in Ad Seg, only their *current* time in Ad Seg is provided. For many, their STG confirmation dates were years before they were actually placed in segregation. This was not a “space availability” issue, but rather if the spreadsheet listed an offender as confirmed in 1987 and placed in Ad Seg in 2003, this was because he had been released sometime during that 16-year time span, and then ended up back in TDCJ custody.

a “glitch” in the computer system was more likely the culprit (A.P., personal communication, May 18, 2012).

SUMMARY

This chapter detailed the data analysis plan for the exploratory case study of prison gang renunciation and resocialization within the Texas prison system. Sources of evidence to increase reliability, participant selection, data collection, and obstacles and caveats to conducting research in prisons were presented. Despite the inherent obstacles in prison research, from gaining entrance into the facility itself and cultivating the necessary relationships, researchers have an additional barrier to overcome: “control issues about the publication of their findings” (Patenaude, 2004, p. 86S). It seems that getting *into* prison and getting *out* may prove less difficult than getting out the final product.

Chapter 5: Findings

This research is a case study on the resocialization of prison gang members who, by renouncing their gang membership, complete a nine-month process intended to release them from segregation into the general prison population. Case studies are examined in their entirety so the researcher may understand them as fully and completely as possible, without focusing on “prediction or causal inference” (Drisko, 1997, p. 191), yet the search for cause is implied. Archival records, direct observation, interview transcripts and physical artifacts are examples of sources of evidence analyzed to address the research questions below.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS: ONCE MORE WITH FEELING

The following research questions guided this study:

- (1) What are TDCJ’s measures for “effectiveness” and how does it define “success” for GRAD? What are its goals for offenders who complete the GRAD process (i.e., No recidivism? No major disciplinary infractions once returned to the general population? A commitment to remaining gang-free in prison and the free world?)? Based on what is known about prison resocialization, prison culture, gang culture and prison gangs, as well as general theory and findings with regard to socialization, would a process like GRAD even be expected to be effective?
- (2) Are there differences between the types of prison gang members who choose to renounce and those who opt to continue a life in administrative segregation as prison gang members?

- (3) How do the views and perceptions of correctional staff regarding a prison gang member's ability or inability to "repair" himself mitigate the potential success of the GRAD process in the immediate and long-term? How does prison administration view the process of change and resocialization based on their perceptions of prison gangs, and how does this impact the process and its potential for expansion, support and longevity?

As I pored over the prison staff and law enforcement officer interview transcripts, culled the general themes that pertained to each question, and then dug further for sub-themes by interpreting the literal meaning of a respondent's words, I realized that responses were not neatly divided among each research question, but rather intertwined. For example, respondents' ideas on the success of the process hinged on the type of offender who chose to renounce, and the decision to renounce was impacted by age, years in segregation, and the promise of contact visits (the marriage of questions #1 and #2). Additionally, the transformative process each offender undergoes is not unlike that experienced by GRAD officers; the core curriculum alters the offender, just as the GRAD atmosphere alters both offender and correctional staff (the marriage of questions #1 and #3). The views of non-GRAD correctional officers on the process itself (as surmised by respondents' experiences) are linked to the definitions of GRAD's goals and perceived success (a blend of questions #1 and #3). Although the quickest path from Point A to Point B is a straight line, the process

of internal change and the interpretation of data are never that uneventful or uncomplicated.

SECURITY THREAT GROUP STATISTICS

Gang Violence in Texas Prisons

As discussed in Chapter 2, TDCJ officials in 1998 conceded that “75 percent of the violence” was attributable to prison gang members (Burnett & Siegel, “Race relations in Texas prisons”), a figure later matched by a similar 75% claim by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (National Institute of Corrections, 2000, “Correctional strategies in gang management”). But how does TDCJ today classify prison gang violence? Using alternate definitions – such as “gang-related,” “gang-involved,” or “gang-motivated” – undoubtedly produces varying levels of violence. The STGMO now has shied away from its previous “gang member-related” category (yes, a fourth variation on a familiar theme) and differentiates between that and “gang-related,” its present choice. Additional in-house training on documenting prison gang activity and violence under the “gang-related” label has “helped some in cutting down on the statistical incidence reports that say they’re gang-related, because just because they’re a gang member doesn’t make the incident gang-related” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

[J]ust because a gang member assaulted somebody in a dayroom because he wanted to watch “Wheel of Fortune” and the other guy didn’t, that is not gang-related. He just happened to be a member of a gang in the dayroom wanting to watch “Wheel of Fortune”....Don’t report that statistically as a gang-related incident, because it’s not. It’s nothing to do with gang activity. It just has to do with these two guys not wanting to watch the same show....Everything that has a gang member involved is

not necessarily gang-related (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Based on these two definitions, a retrospective comparison of total violent incidents calculated before and after this administrative change – from the all-encompassing “gang member-related” to the more restrictive “gang-related” – might reveal a decrease in violent gang activity where none actually exists. On the contrary, the amount of STG-related violence previously may have been inflated by classifying every act involving an STG member as one done *for* or *on behalf of* the gang. Another STGMO official, however, believes that every incident involving a prison gang member should be tabulated, “whether it’s a gang-related activity or not,” in order to “discover trends [and] get a true sense of what is or isn’t going on” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Mr. A.P. in the STGMO challenged the past “75%” claim, stating that today “most of our violence is not attributed to STGs” (personal communication, January 4, 2012). Because confirmed prison gang members are segregated, the remaining gang members in general population (i.e., those who are not members of the identified STGs and, therefore, not subject to TDCJ’s STG Ad Seg policy) are free to prey on other inmates, as they “have...not a lot to lose”:

Most of it nowadays has got to do with the fact that violence by an offender who is an STG gang member brings attention to that person, and they don’t want the attention. Because if they get the attention and we find out they are an STG gang member, they’re going to Seg. Case closed for the STGs. On the other hand, gang members who are not STGs will do most of the violence, because they have, really, not a lot to lose. The worst that can happen is they’ll get reduced in classification, get

a little bit more restrictive category of cell. And even if they do end up getting disciplined far enough to go to Ad Seg, they'll only be there for a while; couple of years tops, probably. So there's not as much consequence, to me, to the rest of the gangs that are not STGs versus those that are. So, the STG gangs have a desire to stay out of the spotlight, where non-STG gangs, in my opinion, they don't care (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

But this does not necessarily mean that STG members have a lesser propensity for violence; they may have fewer direct opportunities within the prison because they are segregated. As one Texas warden noted about the use of segregation as a strategy to combat STGs,

I think [Ad Seg's] been effective just because it softened it up. We do not see near the violence that we used to see (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Ad Seg as STG Management Tool

The use of Ad Seg to control and contain prison gang members is a policy not likely to be forsaken, as the consequences would be too great. One STGMO official predicts what the prison system might look like without the policy, restating the reasons why he believes it is necessary:

We went from 52 homicides to zero because of the confinement and their history. It's why it was done, why the decision was made, because it didn't exist. Who made the decision and what basis they had for that decision, I have no idea. But the impact was tremendous. We don't have the homicides that we used to have. If we were to quit putting inmates in Seg as STG members, I don't think we would have the same immediate homicide rate that we had, but you would have homicides. There's a lot of ill will out there. You'd have a different environment in the prison again....I think Ad Seg is the best way to manage gangs, not just STGs, but even if they're not STGs. There has to be a consequence to them, in an environment that is restrictive enough to at least give them time to think about what they're doing. In a lot of cases, it's an effective management tool (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

However, aside from the detrimental psychological effects of segregation, another negative unintended consequence exists for TDCJ policy: Ad Seg has become an enemy “management tool” for other non-STG gangs that roam general population and influence prison policy.

By removing a specific group [and placing its members in segregation], you allow another group who doesn't go to Seg, you allow them to be able to manipulate and control activity. Specifically, tango [and] TS [Texas Syndicate]. Tangos don't go to Seg; TS does. So if the tangos don't like the TS, all they have to do is assault the TS, [and] the gang office gets involved because there was a fight or whatever happened. Now we have a gang member that's a TS identified. As soon as we process the paperwork [to confirm his STG membership], he goes to Seg. Effectively, we are a tool of the tangos, and they're using us to take their enemy out of population (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Ad Seg is also used as a general deterrent for other offenders, as one STGMO employee explains that it is used “to discourage joining the gangs. The people in general population have got to know what those guys in Seg go through. They've just got to know that, ‘I don't want to be back there, and if I join this group, I'm going to go back there’” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). It has, however, also taught up-and-coming groups, such as the tangos, just how far to push that imaginary line without crossing over into official STG territory governed by STG policy.

TDCJ STG Trend Data (2004-2011)

For the past several years, the confirmed STG population has remained fairly constant at approximately 6% of the total prison population. (See Table 5.1) The dramatic rise in tango members has catapulted the total number of

incarcerated offenders affiliated with street gangs and cliques (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012), but the 12 STGs

maintain almost a static population, because we'll confirm three and three will go through GRAD. We'll confirm four, and five will go through GRAD. So it's maintaining kind of a static....The percentage doesn't change a tenth of a percentage from month to month to month of gang members related to total population. And I attribute that a whole lot to this department and the fact that the process that we have in place and the procedures we have in place keep that population down and maintain that population at an even level. But what we were hoping GRAD would do was maybe even lower it some. But there's just too many to even...you know...2,500 have completed out of a population of 11,000, so that's pretty good (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Police Officer I.C., a 24-year law enforcement veteran, with 14 of those directly involved in prison gang investigations, agreed with the one-step-forward-two-steps-back estimate:

You probably have more gang members being born every day, joining gangs than you have GRAD guys graduating from GRAD (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

If this remains the case, GRAD will always be needed.

The tables below provide historical trend data on the use of Ad Seg in the Texas prison system. From 2007-present, confirmed STG members in TDCJ comprised approximately 6% of the prison population. (See Table 5.1) Based on the limited data provided, the percentage steadily increased over the years, before tapering off in 2007. Possible explanations for the growth include: STG members being released or discharged from prison and subsequently returned for new crimes or technical parole violations; increased TDCJ staff training to

recognize, monitor and document suspected prison gang members; additional staff resources to address a backlog of paperwork on suspected members to be confirmed; and the dynamics of prison life and politics of prison gangs (for instance, as tango members increase their numbers on the units, they may “out” suspected STG members who are then confirmed by prison officials).

Table 5.1: Confirmed STG Population and Confirmed STG Ad Seg Population versus Total TDCJ Population by Reporting Period/Date*

	Confirmed STG Population** (and % of total TDCJ population)	Confirmed STG Ad Seg Population***	Total TDCJ Population****
Reporting Period			
February 1-29, 2012	9,343 (total % 6.02)	4,998 (total % 3.22)	155,077
December 1-31, 2007	9,419 (total % 6.06)	6,308 (total % 4.06)	155,382
December 1-31, 2004	8,505 (total % 5.63)	6,587 (total % 4.36)	150,987
December 1-31, 2002	7,048 (total % 4.80)	5,867 (total % 4.00)	146,713
December 1-31, 2001	6,137 (total % 4.29)	5,236 (total % 3.66)	143,106
December 1-31, 2000	5,530 (total % 3.75)	Not available	147,586
November 1-30, 2000	5,616 (total % 3.78)	Not available	148,440

*Based on data made available to the researcher. (Data was not provided for consecutive years.)

**Only male offenders are reflected in the data.

***Only male offenders are reflected in the data. This represents confirmed STG members placed in Ad Seg due to their STG label.

****Figure includes both male and female offenders in TDCJ custody during the reporting period.

Table 5.2 depicts the number of confirmed and suspected prison gang members over the past several years, along with the number of offenders confined to Ad Seg. (This total Ad Seg number represents all TDCJ offenders,

male and female, STG member and regular population offender.) By 2011, approximately 9,600 inmates had been identified and confirmed as members of the 12 STGs.

Table 5.2: Growth of Ad Seg and STG Populations in TDCJ, Fiscal Years 2004-2011

Population	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ad Seg*	9,687	9,656	9,542	9,186	8,807	8,492	8,547	8,784
Confirmed STG**	8,224	9,499	9,472	9,387	9,364	9,379	9,948	9,621
Suspected STG**	2,717	2,988	2,986	2,856	2,740	2,217	2,092	2,302

*These figures represent both male and female TDCJ offenders placed in Ad Seg, including confirmed STG members. (See Glossary of Terms in Chapter 1 for detailed information on the four types of Ad Seg within TDCJ.)

**Only male offenders are reflected in these figures.

The number of confirmed STG members confined to Ad Seg has decreased gradually over the past few years, based on the available data. (See Table 5.3) At the end of Fiscal Year 2010 on August 31, 2011, 5,143 confirmed STG members were serving their sentences in segregation based on their prison gang member status. (Using the 2011 data available in Table 5.2, confirmed STG members in Ad Seg represented approximately 53% of the total Ad Seg inmate population on hand on August 31, 2011.)

Table 5.3: STG Ad Seg Population on Hand, 2009-2011

Date	Total STG Ad Seg Population*
August 31, 2009	5,762
August 31, 2010	5,482
August 31, 2011	5,143

*Only confirmed male STG offenders are reflected in these figures.

For the past few years, as shown in Table 5.4, more than a thousand male and female offenders have been released directly from Ad Seg – without the

benefit of any transitional phase from segregation to population to prepare them for their return to the free world. (This total includes confirmed STG members, although the number of STG members released straight from segregation was not provided.)

Table 5.4: TDCJ Offender Releases from Ad Seg to Community by Fiscal Year

TDCJ Offender Releases from Ad Seg to Community by Fiscal Year*			
	Released to Supervision (Parole)	Discharged	Total Released
Sept. 1, 2010 – Aug. 31, 2011 (FY 2010)	495	818	1,313
Sept. 1, 2009 – Aug. 31, 2010 (FY 2009)	443	778	1,221
Sept. 1, 2008 – Aug. 31, 2009 (FY 2008)	508	980	1,488

*These figures represent both male and female TDCJ offenders released directly from Ad Seg to the broader community, either on parole supervision or no supervision at all. Male STG members are included in these figures; however, the number of STG members released directly from Ad Seg was not available.

PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

For this study, a total of 16 individuals were interviewed: two law enforcement officers, two STGMO staff, six correctional/security staff (four at Ramsey and two at Ellis), three teachers (two at Ramsey and one at Ellis), and three counselors (one at Ramsey and two at Ellis).²²⁹ All TDCJ staff – teachers, counselors (also referred to as “instructors” throughout this chapter) and security staff – reported TDCJ as the only prison system for which they had ever

²²⁹ One counselor had worked in GRAD on both units.

worked.²³⁰ Their prison experience ranged from 7.5 years to 22.25 years, and respondents had been assigned to GRAD between 3 months and 9.5 years. (See Table 5.5) Criminal justice employment for the two law enforcement officers interviewed ranged from 24 to 26 years.²³¹

Table 5.5: Average Years of Experience Working in TDCJ and GRAD

Job Classification	TDCJ	GRAD
Counselors (n = 3)	14.75	5.22
Teachers (n = 3)	13.33	4.17
Correctional Officers (n = 6)	15.46	3.37
STGMO Staff (n = 2)	16.21	4.75

Staff Recruitment

For the majority of respondents, the path to GRAD paralleled that of the offenders; that is, it was a voluntary assignment, albeit sometimes a gently coerced one for the officers and occasional teacher. After being “hand selected” and reviewing the process at the Ramsey Unit, one teacher agreed to the position, despite her initial reluctance (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012),²³² while another thought “it might be kind of a fun change” (M.M., personal

²³⁰ One counselor reported having worked for several years in residential treatment facilities prior to TDCJ; another was employed in various TDCJ divisions and in residential treatment before signing on for GRAD. Two teachers also taught in various settings outside of TDCJ for several years prior to their employment with the prison system.

²³¹ One officer (I.C.) has spent 14 of his 24 years in law enforcement directly “oversee[ing] operations and investigations involving Mexican [prison] gangs and other Mexican criminal organizations,” and the other (D.E.) has worked for his police department for three years; however, he previously worked for the prison system for 23 years, with 13 years’ experience specifically assigned to investigating STGs.

²³² This teacher added that GRAD offenders have a “really bad reputation because these guys are bad guys....But after coming over here [for a period of about three to four months], and

communication, January 6, 2012) from the younger general population offenders she previously taught. Two of the counselors interviewed were recruited (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012; F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012); one initially refused until he accepted an invitation to attend a completion ceremony and observed the classes. He later reflected: “I said, ‘Well, I’ll give it a try.’ It turned out to be a real good thing for me. I’ve grown up a lot with the gang members” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). One teacher, who was “told” he was “going to go over there [to GRAD] and teach cognitive on Monday,” offered a simple explanation for why he opted to stay: “I loved it” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

For security staff, the preference, according to one officer at the Ramsey Unit, is to have “primary GRAD officers” who are “assigned specifically to GRAD to deal with the offenders because they are somewhat savvy in terms of being incarcerated” (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).²³³ A no-substitute-teacher policy works best when dealing with these offenders. This individual explained that supervisory staff “[rotate] assignments...to move them around to different areas” in the prison (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012); hence, he “didn’t choose to come to GRAD,” but rather “was selected to” (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Another officer concurred with this assessment, as he, too, was “chosen” by a senior GRAD officer for the assignment: “Basically they said, ‘You will go work here,’ and I said, ‘Okay.’ [....]

watching them change in the process was really dramatic. I saw that, really, their responses were not much different from my [previous trusty prison camp] students I had. I felt I was being led in this direction, to come over here” (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

²³³ According to another officer, security staff in general population rotate daily and do not work with the same group of offenders on a daily basis as they do in GRAD (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Really didn't have much choice" (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). A third officer attributed his presence in GRAD as "just an administrative move" (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). It was a voluntarily involuntary recruitment, but once there, each chose to stay.

For other correctional officers, the decision to work in GRAD was indeed a voluntary one (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012; B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012; H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). One officer explained that he was recruited by an official in the STGMO (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012), and another elaborated that the GRAD assignment is classified as a "preferred position" with required "minimum qualifications":

[Administrative staff] did, like, a board where you had to go in front of the warden, and he asked you questions about gangs. What was your interest in gangs? And what we felt made us a good, or how do you say it, what makes us think that we're good for the job in the GRAD department (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012)?

One teacher acknowledged that working in GRAD demands a "certain personality," and for correctional staff, "you're either an officer who comes in here who really participates in this or you don't" (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Subtle Differences Between Teachers and Counselors

As mentioned in Chapter 3, non-security staff assigned to GRAD are employed by two distinct agencies: The Windham School District claims the teachers, and TDCJ the counselors. A GRAD teacher at the Ellis Unit characterized himself as a "hybrid" employee because "we are Windham

teachers teaching for TDC in a GRAD program. We are very unique....There's not that many of us, and we're really a rare creature....I love it. I can't imagine anything less" (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Although they teach in the same environment with the same offenders (or "students," as instructors refer to them), the teachers and counselors, because they work for different agencies that sign their paychecks, are subject to different "personal safety" training. According to one of the teachers, like professions are not treated alike, at least not in GRAD:

Windham approaches it from the academic point. [The] TDC department approaches it, from what I understand, from the safety and security first. Again, that's two total polar opposite places. We know nothing about any kind of safety training. I'm not aware of any teacher that has gas [i.e., spray] or wears a [protective] vest, so it's a whole different approach (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012),

yet the counselors are equipped with the accoutrements of self-defense. When asked if additional training on gangs and safety might influence the manner in which he interacts with the offenders, this teacher denied that that knowledge would negatively impact how he teaches, but rather it would "give [him]...a little more sense of personal safety":

I taught some really difficult characters in here, and I've never been assaulted, and I've never been hurt. I've had someone be verbally brutal, but I would like to know some kind of physical defense or something in a life or death situation....At some point I'm going to need to know something. I mean, really, I don't come to work fearful at all, but, in reality, I'm dealing with some really difficult characters. So, who knows? Somebody may jump one of my teachers or something. I don't know. So, just pray before you come to work (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

While one teacher wants a vest for protection, a GRAD counselor mandated to wear one adopted a different stance: “Well, over here in Phase I, the first thing I would do is – we have to wear a vest to protect us – I would remove the vest” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Perhaps shedding this one protective layer is an attempt to show the offenders that they are – to a degree – to be trusted in this new environment, or at least given the benefit of the doubt, as they begin the transformation from Ad Seg to general population offender.

SNAPSHOT OF GRAD CLASSES GRADUATING IN JANUARY 2012

On January 25, 2012, the GRAD process celebrated its 155th and 156th completion ceremonies at the Ramsey Unit with 26 offenders (known as “completers” or graduates) renouncing their membership and returning to general population. The Ellis Unit commended its 29 completers for GRAD Groups 39 and 40 on January 27, 2012, and also witnessed their return to the general population. Since the first graduating classes in May 2001 at the Ramsey Unit and September 2009 at the Ellis Unit, 2,668 offenders have successfully completed the process at both facilities.²³⁴ (See Table 5.6 for a complete breakdown of offenders by STG and GRAD unit who completed the process in January 2012)

²³⁴ These numbers represent the number of offenders completing the GRAD process at both units since GRAD’s inception in 2000 through February 29, 2012.

Table 5.6: Offenders Completing the GRAD Process in January 2012*

Security Threat Group	Ellis Unit (Groups 39 and 40) January 27, 2012	Ramsey Unit (Groups 155 and 156) January 25, 2012	Total Offenders
Aryan Brotherhood of Texas	5	6	11
Aryan Circle	4	1	5
Barrio Azteca	0	1	1
Bloods	0	0	0
Crips	0	0	0
Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos	1	2	3
Mexikanemi	5	7	12
Partido Revolucionario Mexicano	2	1	3
Raza Unida	5	3	8
Texas Chicano Brotherhood	0	0	0
Texas Mafia	0	1	1
Texas Syndicate	7	4	11
TOTAL	29	26	55

*The initial data request was modified to only examine data on the Ramsey and Ellis offenders who completed GRAD in January 2012, as these were the completion ceremonies attended during the data collection period.

Based on the offender data provided, which included a total of 55 individuals completing the process at both units in January 2012, the mean age calculated for the Ellis groups (based on birth year) was 40 years old (birth year range 1951-1983); for the Ramsey offenders, the mean age was 41 years old (birth year range 1954-1982). The racial breakdown for the groups represented was nearly identical: The combined Ramsey Unit groups were 31% White and 68.9% Hispanic, and for the Ellis Unit groups, 30.7% White and 69.2% Hispanic. No African-American STGs were represented in these graduating classes.

DEFINING GRAD SUCCESS: EXACTLY WHAT ARE WE DOING, AND ARE WE DOING IT?

Before GRAD's success or effectiveness can be defined, and what the process purports to be successful or effective *at doing*, it is imperative to know the endgame: its goals, and not simply the goals for offenders once they complete the process, but also the goals while they experience it.

GRAD Goals: Different Perspectives Based on Assignment

One of the fundamental assumptions guiding this research, based on countless conversations over the years with correctional staff and law enforcement, was that GRAD's underlying *raison d'être* was renouncing the gang and extracting the gangster from the prisoner. The results of interviews with those intimately involved in the process challenged that belief.

Teachers and Counselors

The teachers and counselors identified the goals as "rehabilitation" (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012) and reintegration into the general population (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012) so each offender can participate in other prison programs available to population inmates (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012). Stressing the importance of teaching their students "to stop and think" (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012) and "giv[ing them] the information that they need in order to change themselves" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012), the educational staff strive "to get them to where they're going to be a manageable, productive inmate in population or a productive citizen out there in the free world" (J.T.,

personal communication, January 5, 2012). Although many staff do not know if and when offenders in their GRAD classes are slated for parole or discharge, they remain realistic that many offenders will eventually join the 70,000 men and women released from TDCJ facilities annually. Thus, they optimistically teach them lessons they hope have a greater shelf-life beyond that of their sentence, as one counselor has explained to his groups:

The thing about these people is, and I tell them this, that they weren't even capable of doing prison. So, what we had to do is make another prison inside of a prison. "You haven't reached the point where you're even a good convict yet. So, we've got to put you by yourself. And what we're trying to do is, what we're hoping to do is to bypass a conflict and make you a good citizen. We're going to turn you into a good citizen." And they'll say, "Why do you want to do that?" I'm saying, "*Because you might be my next door neighbor.* You're somebody's son. You're somebody's cousin. You're somebody's nephew. You're a human" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Another counselor hopes for assimilation as a desired outcome: "I'm a realist, and I say at least I want you to be able to fit into the society you're going to be in, whatever it is. So maybe it will not make you a lamb, but at least you can act like one" (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). He aims not for unattainable, saintly perfection, but for a TDCJ offender whose behaviour keeps him away from a correctional officer's attention.

The identified goals range from the physical (i.e., relocate from segregation to population) to the enlightened (i.e., help offenders recognize their thinking errors and change their behaviour) to the statutorily-mandated (i.e.,

reintegrate them back into society). One counselor reframes his personal goal for his students as an existential one:

How am I going to change that person's spirit? That's my goal – to empower him enough where he can be whoever he was supposed to be. I don't know who he is supposed to be. I don't want to say I don't care, but it's none of my business. When I say I don't care, it sounds like I'm not interested in him. But it's really none of my business what he wants to be. But I know *this* isn't it. You know, it's the question of: "Who am I, and what am I doing here?" Most people never ask, "Well, is this all there is?" or "What am I doing on the planet?" I mean, "What's life? What's going on?" You know, "What do I want to do?" Most people never get to do what they want to do....[The] needs I'm looking for is to make a better human being, a more caring, loving, concerned human being (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Security Staff

Correctional officers also view GRAD as a vehicle through which to reintegrate those who have renounced back into general population and, along the way, "change [their] mindset" (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012) by "giving them tools, just different ways of thinking, [and] different ways that they can resolve their problems" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) in order to create a "better convict" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Another spoke of interrupting the recidivism "cycle" through the lessons taught, adding that GRAD is "trying to let them know it's a different way to think, a different way of reacting and dealing with life" (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

The educational and correctional staff both expressed similar goals, despite their different roles in the GRAD process: education and rehabilitation

versus safety and security. The primary goal is a return to population, but the secondary goal and greater benefit is a change in behavior. As one Ramsey officer explained,

From a basic standpoint, we're just trying to get offenders back to population. Confirmed gang members, the only way they can get out from Seg to general population is through this GRAD process. That's basically what's happening. What we're trying to accomplish, though, is a change in their behavior, a change in their thinking patterns, changing their thought processes to deal with problems on their own. Being in a gang, all they've known is listening to somebody else tell them what to do. And it kind of goes like that. Hopefully, we're giving them some sort of idea that they can think for themselves, they're perfectly capable of thinking for themselves. And we're trying to provide tools for them. That's not only going to help them in population, but hopefully, help them whenever they go, whatever they're doing....So, that's what we're trying to accomplish. And I didn't realize that until I started working here (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

One Team, One Fight: Similar Goals

In accordance with GRAD's mission statement ("To provide a safe and secure environment for those offenders who choose to voluntarily renounce their gang affiliation by affording a structured process that will furnish the proper tools to reintegrate offenders into the general population" [GRAD Completion Ceremony program, Ellis Unit, January 27, 2012]), those in GRAD refer to the statement's components in their defined goals for GRAD. Instructors' and security staff's goals often overlap – one team, one fight – to facilitate change in a "safe and secure environment." As one correctional officer stated,

At the end of the day, we're all trying to help an inmate change from what he used to be to what he is now. Can we change them from being a gang member or can we tell them, "You're not a gang member no more"? No.

We all know that. “We didn’t tell you to stop being a gang member. You chose to stop being a gang member. You made that decision all on your own. It had nothing to do with us. The only thing we’re here to do is to try to help you to not be a gang member anymore. Change your way of thinking, help you with your stress and anger management, help you with your substance abuse, things like that (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Teacher J.E. understands that safety and security come first, and sees the “path” to achieving his and correctional staff’s goals in GRAD as “different” yet “complement[ary]”:

I think they’re a little [different], but I understand it. That’s the guy protecting my life out there. So if he tells me something in his best opinion, I shouldn’t do this, or I should do this, I will follow in his steps. He sees it from a “safety first.” No doubt about it, he has to. That’s what he does. I see it from an “educational first.” That’s what I have to do because that’s what I do, and if I ever fear coming into work, I couldn’t do it. So I don’t fear it. So we see it from two different perspectives, and when those two butt, safety and security has to win. I don’t have a problem with that. I really like being alive. So I see them as two total different paths that complement each other, and I will bow to the safety and security. And if they come in here right now and say, “We got to go; you, too. You got to go,” I’m not going to say, “No, I’m going to stand here and teach my class.” I’m gone. I mean, that’s just the way it is. So I am subservient to them because what they do for my survival is more important than what I do for their survival (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Money as Decision-Maker and Goal-Setter

For all the talk about providing the “tools” for creating a successful GRAD offender and “trying to give offenders a second chance” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012) in their bid for resocialization, a few respondents admitted to the practicality of the agency’s decision to implement the process. One officer acknowledged that

it's expensive to keep an offender in administrative segregation for 20 years, and then let him out to society where he learned nothing, and he's still a gang member. Right now we're trying to give them a second chance and trying to help them get an education so that when we do let them out to society, they can't just say, "Well, TDC locked them in a box and threw away the key." Partly, it's making the effort for the offenders who want that effort. So I think it's a win-win street; it really is. There [are] some offenders who have exhibited that they're not a threat to our institution. So those particular offenders were given a second chance (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

One counselor affirmed that the "motivation [to create GRAD] has nothing to do with rehabilitation as much as economics" because TDCJ realized that it was "too expensive to warehouse humans one at a time" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). The result of this budget-driven decision was a happy accident: "What happened was when they started doing that, they started to get good results because, actually, we do a good job" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Reciting the prison system's "unofficial" stance on GRAD's goals, one counselor, while agreeing that "help[ing offenders] to socialize" is his educational objective, presents a more cynical view on what GRAD is trying to accomplish and why:

TDCJ's goal, in my mind, is kind of what I've been told. So it's not something that I've come up [with] on my own. And it's unofficial. It's not an official source. But it's very costly to keep people in Seg. And you also have behavioral problems, and it causes behavioral problems. It's not going to make you any better to spend 23 hours a day in a Seg cell. That's probably going to drive you crazy after about 20 years. So to empty the Seg cells, it makes it cheaper because then you can house them two to a cell, or you can even maybe move them into dorms. It's a lot cheaper. And it's also easier to manage them so you have less staff

trying to deal with this guy....So I'm thinking, okay, well, their goal, it kind of makes sense, what I was told unofficially by different people. Their goal is just to empty the Seg cell. So if you look at it, the kind of a logical thing is I put you into Seg, ostensibly you were too dangerous to be in the population. Now, if I left you in Seg for six months to 20 years, and all of a sudden I decide I can't really afford to keep you in the Seg cell, I want you in population. If I say you were too dangerous to be in that Seg cell, and I left you in that Seg cell for six months to 20 years, and then I move you into population without anything changing, being in the Seg cell did not in any way make you better. Now you get out and you kill John Doe offender or John Doe officer; now you're looking at a serious lawsuit. "He was too dangerous to put in population, and you kept him out for 20 years. You didn't do anything to make it better. You did stuff that really made him worse. And now you didn't protect me. You put him with me." So, they put me in there, I guess, so that they have somewhere to hang their hat and say, "Well, Mr. C.G., miracle worker, fix them." I'm like, "Well, okay." Now that's TDC. Me? I'm here not to change a wolf into a lamb, because that can't be done. What I'm here to do is to help them to socialize and be able to blend in with normal, maybe not normal, but to be able to actually function in society [i.e., general population] without undue risk of harm to other people or themselves (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

A law enforcement officer familiar with the GRAD process echoed the sentiment.

While the

official line of the state at the time was we wanted to give people the opportunity to succeed [and] leave the gang,...those of us that have been with the system for a while [understood] the only reason that they were doing that was to free up beds, to...make the state look good...to the public: "Look what we're doing with these guys. We are giving them an opportunity." But it really never amounted to, in my opinion,...it was just going through the motions, because I don't ever remember seeing anybody really get really debriefed the way they were supposed to. There were just blank, you know, signatures pretty much...well, like, "Okay, you know, he told me he is no longer a member," and that's it. And it was more about increasing the numbers [of ex-STG members] through GRAD, but it was for the wrong reasons. It was never...never really, you know, for really to helping out the convicts leave out [of the gang]" (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011).

The financial and psychological costs of long-term segregation may have been the catalysts for TDCJ's recognition of a problem – “somebody said we did a great job of identifying them, but now what” (S.S., personal communication, April 14, 2005)? – but it is up to the GRAD staff to help reframe that into a rehabilitative reality. Does it really matter what the initial reasons were for implementing such a process if the unintended consequences – furnishing offenders with cognitive intervention, anger management and socialization skills – eventually are re-stated as its core goals?

De-Ganging as a Goal: If We Don't Say It, Is It?

Noticeable by its absence is the mention of renunciation, de-ganging, or extracting the gang mentality as primary goals, as stated by TDCJ GRAD staff. (One counselor shared a story of a GRAD offender who argued that, for him, the process was unnecessary because he was “not a gang member.” The counselor replied, “This isn't about gangs. This is about changing your life...” [F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012].) No one involved in the daily-ness of GRAD articulated this as a specific goal. GRAD is a process, they stressed, and renunciation is but a minor blip, something that is over and done with once the inmate signs the papers to initiate the Disassociation Investigation; yesterday I was a prison gang member, today I am not. The offender has done his part, and with the spilling of the ink, he has been anointed a “former” gang member.

However, one STGMO official expounded on this when asked which GRAD components were designed to extract the “gangster” out of the prisoner:

I don't think you're ever going to extract gang membership out of a gang member. *All you're going to have is a gang member who is no longer active.* That's all you're going to ever have. And it's something that I've really identified with and leaned towards when it comes to understanding. You're never going to take in a gang member and make them an ex-gang member, unless they're dead. All you'll have is a gang member. And I asked a gang member a question one time. And they said, “There's no such thing as an ex-gang member. There's only gang members who are no longer active.” So, essentially, we're trying to get them to understand that...you don't have to be a gang member. There are other choices (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Total renunciation of the lifestyle is more elusive, and only with the passage of time and ample opportunity to practice what they have learned during GRAD's cognitive skills boot camp will these “no longer active” gang members challenge the STGMO official's explanation. Will the gang mentality remain in remission beyond the nine months?

While it may appear to be so obvious as to not need repeating, it is interesting to note that only one respondent, an STGMO representative, referenced renunciation when the question of goals was posed – “to allow an offender to renounce a gang membership,” which was quickly followed by a similar refrain – “to receive some intervention instead of just opening the door and kicking him out” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). When pressed further, another STGMO employee acknowledged that “remov[ing] that [gang] mindset” is “one of the sub-purposes of GRAD,” but maintained that the

“*main* purpose is to get them ready to live with other people” and “get them ready for general population, not the streets, but life in prison for the rest of their term” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). GRAD goals are guided by what the prison system can do for the offender (i.e., offer “tools” in the curricula), and not what the offender can do for himself (i.e., only the offender can choose to renounce his gang membership to initiate the process).

Like his peers, one Ellis officer elaborated that the process is about “teach[ing] them basic lessons...that they should have been taught as a child growing up,” but addressed the elephant in the room, the “GR” in GRAD and its place in the list of goals: “Well, I know it says ‘gang renouncement’ on it, but it’s not really about gang renouncement, because they decided to do that on their own....It’s not something we make them do” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

During the January 2012 completion ceremony held in the Ellis Unit chapel, an STGMO official stood before Groups 39 and 40 and, indirectly referencing the questions posed during the interview for this research a few weeks earlier, rhetorically asked the students, “How do you define success? And successful or effective *at doing what?*” He continued by answering his own question – that only 12 past GRAD completers had been reconfirmed as STG

members.²³⁵ Although respondents did not express the goals of the process in terms of “gang renunciation” or extracting the gangster from the prisoner, “success” is primarily measured in terms of returning to the gang. One correctional officer also identified “[not] going back to the gang” upon graduation, along with remaining in general population and not being a disciplinary problem, as his measures of success and effectiveness (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). (An alternate explanation, however, could be that re-joining one’s former primary prison group, the gang, is evidence that the inmate was not able to be resocialized in the prison setting, and that he did not fully internalize the new norms and beliefs taught during the nine months. In this sense, “reconfirmation” might be a concisely-stated synonym for “inability to be resocialized in the prison setting.”)²³⁶ Respondents’ stated goals mirror the GRAD mission statement – and the interviewees seem more hopeful that offenders can meet those calibrated goals than the global and all-or-nothing “he’s never returning to gangs.”

GRAD Defined by Non-GRAD Officers: What They Think GRAD Is

Several respondents shared their opinions on their non-GRAD peers’ perceptions of the process and the offenders involved. When asked how non-

²³⁵ Another STGMO employee put the number of reconfirmations at 11 (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

²³⁶ It is unknown if the reconfirmed GRAD completers had been (1) released from TDCJ and re-joined the gang while in the free world, (2) released from TDCJ, returned on a new conviction or technical violation, and re-joined the gang once back in prison, or (3) reconfirmed without ever being released from prison (i.e., had completed GRAD, were sent to another unit, and re-joined the gang while continuing to serve their sentences in general population).

GRAD security staff view the GRAD process, a few officers disclosed that it has been referred to as “bull crap” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012) and a “waste of time” because these offenders are “not going to change” (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012), and “will never work” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). To the list of misconceptions, another Ellis officer added, “They just think the state’s being ‘friendly,’ the GRAD officers are ‘friendly,’ and they’re just letting the inmates do whatever they want” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Officer L.K. at the Ramsey Unit affirmed this fallacy of “friendliness,” noting that non-GRAD officers believe “we spoil [the offenders] through the GRAD process because it’s not like that when they go to population” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). (An officer at Ramsey explained that he was initially reluctant to work in GRAD because he “didn’t want to hold them back. I was kind of strict in the rules and all that, and the program? I thought, ‘They don’t want them to fail. They want them to succeed.’ I told them this is what I am, and if you want me like this, I’ll give it a try. And they accepted me” [R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012]. Thinking administration wanted GRAD to succeed at all costs, he doubted his security-mindedness – enforcing the rules and disciplining offenders – would be a desired trait.) One teacher was a bit harsher in his assessment:

Teacher J.E.: It is my opinion that people that do not work in GRAD hate GRAD. And I don’t really understand that. The only people who like GRAD are people, in my opinion, that know GRAD. I don’t know if they feel like we’re getting some kind of [preferential] treatment down here, playing video games in the room or what. I don’t know what their perception is, but their perceptions are reality. There are several people that I’ve walked by...Now, I’m not a TDC person [i.e., he is employed by the Windham School District], so you understand some of them don’t like

me anyway. They think I make too much money or...I don't know. I can walk down the run, and people will say, "There's one of them worthless GRAD people." And I don't really understand that. I don't know...unless they feel like these guys don't deserve another chance. But what are you going to do? You are going to lock them all up..., and keep them locked up forever? Or are you going to take a chance on some of them, if taking a chance is just moving them to population? We've gotta do something....I've taught everything and more you can teach. This is the best thing I've ever been involved in. I don't know why, though, the dislike for GRAD. I feel it when I get around TDC people. Not our guys [GRAD security staff], but people not associated with it.

Interviewer (Author): Is it correctional staff or administration?

Teacher J.E.: Both. I've heard it from both. I don't understand it. Maybe we hate or fear what we don't understand. I don't know....I feel like what I do is important and makes a difference. But there's some people in here that feel otherwise. I feel sometimes when I'm walking down the run down there, I'm supposed to apologize. I'm not going to do that. I mean, I just feel what me and these other two teachers are doing is important. What these officers are doing is important. But there is a negative vibe from people (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

He continued with the story of an indirect encounter with a non-GRAD officer whom he passed in the hallway:

I'll clean my language up for you, too, but we walked by one day, and [the non-GRAD officer] says, "A bunch of worthless, f-ing GRAD teachers." You know, I've heard high-up people say negative things, but they just don't know what they're talking about. Look, these are the baddest [offenders] in this prison. If we can make them functional, you can't tell me that that's not a good thing. I mean, that's insane. You can't argue that. We have guys in here that have dreams, man! And if I can make them look at their thinking and learn to adjust their thinking enough to tolerate other people and get along in population, then some of these fools are going to get out, and I don't want them at my house or your house. If I can make them look at their thinking and think a little bit and maybe not do something, if they can learn to do that, if I can teach them to do that, that's all good (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Not all GRAD staff report such negative experiences with TDCJ officers not directly involved with the process. Officer H.G., while acknowledging he has heard “a lot of [non-GRAD officers] that don’t know anything about GRAD [say], ‘You’re just letting out gang members into the population’” (personal communication, January 10, 2012), did recognize that others regard GRAD and its offenders positively:

The industries, people in the industries, they like GRAD inmates because they say they come out of Seg, and they work hard and they follow the rules. The kitchen captain likes them. And a lot of the [correctional officers] prefer them because they act a little better than the average offender. Then there are those that have negative things to say also. Like I said, “Ah, you’re just letting out gang members.” But there’s always going to be haters (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, a GRAD assignment is a “preferred position” and a “privilege” for TDCJ security staff, and, according to Officer H.G.,

Whenever I do have an opening in GRAD, I’ll have quite a bit of people put in for it. For example, we just had an education position post and had four people put in for it, four officers off the whole unit. Usually when I have a [GRAD] position to post, I’ll have anywhere from between 18 to 25 put in for it. There are a lot of officers that want to be those officers. They want to be in their shoes because they know that, like I said, these inmates are easier to deal with because we’re so structured. They act better. They do want to come and work at GRAD, so I think they’re kind of envious of them, really (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Those who do not work directly with GRAD do not fully understand what the process entails or is designed to do. Some see it as a way for prison gang members to manipulate the system by fast-tracking from segregation to population (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012; L.K., personal

communication, January 5, 2012). A law enforcement officer familiar with GRAD has had “some discussions” with his fellow officers, stating that “from the law enforcement perspective, the biggest fear is that a lot of these guys really don’t want to renounce...and want to do this to get back in population with their gang’s blessing” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011) to assault rivals or members in poor standing, and to continue running prison rackets. Officer M.R. emphasized the need for the agency “to have a better understanding of what goes into the operation...[so] there will be more openness towards, perhaps, expanding it” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

GRAD’s physical location on the facility, at least at the Ramsey Unit, also may account for a certain degree of the unfamiliarity and lingering misconceptions. According to Officer M.R.,

It’s one of those things that’s “we’re on this side of the building.” Unless you happen to be working over here, it’s not like anyone passes through GRAD to get to their other posts. I mean, this is the end of the road up here. Next to here is Seg. So whoever doesn’t normally work here really doesn’t have an idea of what’s going on over here (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

For correctional officers not accustomed to working in the Ad Seg environment or with prison gang members, they may even be awestruck at what lies at “the end of the road.”

And some of them perceive GRAD to be that way too. “Oh wow, I heard there’s gang members in there. I wonder what that’s like?” And some of them aren’t quite ready for that. They’re not ready to be working around such offenders. These [GRAD offenders] are pretty savvy. They come from Seg to obtain things. They used to be in a cell, and in order to obtain

things, they had to use all their resources to get whatever they want to come into their cell. So when you've got that kind of ideas working, and now you have free reign to walk around...[,] some of them are pretty slick. They already have that savvy-ness of being in Seg, now they're just kind of walking around. In a way I kind of question it sometimes. [Laughs] You kind of do. From time and again, we get a staff member who has not normally worked here because of maybe staffing, it's one of those days where we're extremely short. Well, here, let me pull this guy who normally doesn't work [in GRAD or Ad Seg]. And they come over here. And maybe their ideas change about the whole thing. But as far as anybody from out there talking about them, I think it's like you might as well be in Seg because they don't really see the workings that take place here throughout the day (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Others described how they, too, were skeptical before accepting their GRAD assignment. Immersion in the process, however, altered their perception. One Ramsey officer attributed his initial doubt about the offenders' sincerity in renunciation to "12 years of TDC security probably ingrained in me" (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). His colleague at Ramsey admitted to being "one of them," a non-believer, but "being in the program, I've done a complete 180 because I see the changes between the counselors and the teachers that they go through, and it really does work" (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). His advice to the unconvinced: "I'd probably just tell them you've got to look through different glasses, because you've got to give something a chance before you can actually comment on it. Because without experiencing it, then you don't know what it's all about" (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Another Ramsey officer explained that "you think different about it after you see it firsthand" (R.C., personal communication,

January 6, 2012). Officer M.R. confessed that, prior to his GRAD assignment, he only

knew we were reintegrating offenders back to population[, but] I didn't have an appreciation for the curriculum that was involved and the staff, the teachers and everything. They really are dedicated to what they're doing. I really had no idea. I was just kind of at arm's length with everything, thinking these guys are just trying to get out of Seg. That's the way I viewed it (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Administration's View on GRAD: It Just Depends

In the past, TDCJ staff disclosed that the "skeptics are the ones with power" (P.F., personal communication, June 11, 2007) who adhere to the belief that it is impossible to be transformed from a segregated STG member one day and, nine months later, into a general population offender with no gangster ties. With a gentleman's agreement and subsequent establishment of transition and safety units for GRAD completers, it can be argued that a shift in perception has occurred. According to the STGMO staff, however, the view on offender transformation is "split": "There are some administrators who believe a gang member is a gang member is a gang member, and that mindset can't be removed through this program, and then there are others who lauded it and think that it's a wonderful idea" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). Her STGMO colleague, Mr. A.P., had a similar assessment:

I think you have lots of various opinions. Some will believe that once a gang member, always a gang member. Some of them will believe that they understand the process and program; perhaps they will believe in it. They will view them a little bit differently. But I think that everybody's view is going to be the full spectrum; all the way left to all the way right and everywhere in between. Some administrations may say, "Well, he is a gang member, [or] he was a gang member. Even though he's been through GRAD, I'm not going to let him work in this area of my facility."

The next one might not have a problem with that (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Despite some “nervous[ness]” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012) and a “little bit of reluctance to totally trust” GRAD completers (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012), Officer J.S. believes prison administration is “overall...behind the program 100%” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

While GRAD security staff and instructors focus on promoting internal and transformative change to safely reintegrate the offenders into the general population, administration views the process a “little different[ly],” according to an officer at the Ramsey Unit. Whereas security staff are admittedly a bit “leery” (“We’re security. We’re leery about everything.”) – because “one bad instance [out of] thousands of good instances” will have the doubters ready to pounce with an “I told you so” – prison administration does not “look at [GRAD] through the same eyes as staff.” Instead, their focus is on a facility’s overall safety: “Are these offenders being disruptive? Are they a threat to the institution?” As long as the answer to both questions is a resounding no, then, “for the most part, they don’t have a problem with it” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The STGMO clarifies that the “key here is to understand [GRAD’s] purpose” before one decides to view it favorably or not (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). It is intended to transfer offenders from segregation to population; anything more (such as extracting the gangster from the prisoner) is an added bonus.

People think that if they go to GRAD, then they are going to be wonderful, shining, haloed citizens. Well, that's not the purpose. *The purpose is just to make them be able to survive in prison without being in Seg.* That's the purpose of GRAD. If they take with them more than that, then that's a greater success for the GRAD program. But that's the goal of GRAD. It's not to teach them how to drive a bus or how to teach school. It's to teach them how to live with other people since they haven't been living with other people for such a long time (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

When asked how administration views GRAD completers, Officer M.R.'s response was in accordance with Ms. T.G.'s assessment – that is, perfection and “halos” are elusive, but being the “poster child for [a] good, disciplined, structured individual” is not (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Wardens do not naively view these offenders as “this total exemplary of [the] model inmate,” but rather understand that they “fulfill[ed] the requirements” to “get through the program” and graduate (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012). The return to general population, although clearly a GRAD goal, is the \$200 you collect when you pass Go. It's the roll of the dice and the steps taken – it is the *process* – to get you to where you can collect. They have learned to follow the rules, are respectful, “act better [and] get less cases” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012), and are “eager to work” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012), all reasons that rate high on administration's favorability scale. A warden at the Ellis Unit previously managed one of the designated post-GRAD transition units and was quite familiar with the “good product that [GRAD was] putting out in the general population” (H.G., personal

communication, January 10, 2012). Arriving at Ellis, he commended the staff, stating, “‘Hey, I get the GRAD inmates over there at [the other unit]. And you know what? They’re very well behaved.’ So *he* knows that we’re doing something right. A lot of the upper administration also sees it. The inmates are a cut above the average offender...” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

ALTERNATE DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS: ARE YOU INSIDE THE SYSTEM OR OUT?

One’s definition of success depends upon the vantage point: Is the observer inside or outside the prison system? TDCJ has its ideas, and law enforcement has its own, based upon what it sees in the free world when it comes into contact with TDCJ GRAD completers.

If defining success as getting out of Ad Seg and into general population is the first and foremost criterion, then branding GRAD a success is a valid statement with an asterisk: Serving over 2,600 former gangsters since 2000.²³⁷ But if keeping them out of gangs or clear of criminal activity for the duration, the fact that law enforcement has run into them on the street and arrested them for engaging in criminal activity brands part of the broader success equation as questionable. Is the definition so narrow that failure is close to impossible?

²³⁷ The total number of offenders removed from GRAD consideration before the completion of the two-year Disassociation Investigation and the total number removed during the nine-month process (both voluntarily and non-voluntarily) since GRAD began in 2000 were not available. Complete data was available for Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011; partial data was provided from September 2011 to March 2012 (end of the data collection period). Removals from GRAD will be discussed later in the chapter.

Inside the Walls

Changing beliefs and thoughts, with its concomitant changes in behavior, is integral to GRAD's success, according to both GRAD correctional and educational staff. An Ellis Unit officer explained that, in spite of themselves and despite their initial indifference, the offenders do change their thoughts and beliefs:

I think we are successful at changing a lot of their ways of thinking. A lot of them come in here, most of them will come in here with the intent to just kind of manipulate the system more, or "I just want to get back out in population," or "I just want to get a chance at parole." But when they come in here, and they go through this nine-and-a-half month process, when you're sitting there in class every day listening to the three-step program or whatever they're teaching, it starts sinking in. And a lot of them come in and say, "You know what, at the beginning of this, I wasn't really thinking about what I was going to learn here, but through the end of it, it's really helping me change my ways that I think." And I think it's effective in that way. It does do what it was designed to do. Maybe not for everybody, but for the majority (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Success is measured by not only cognitive and behavioral changes, but also simple calculations. According to the STGMO staff tasked with maintaining GRAD statistics, the process is considered a success based on narrowly defined goals: the number of offenders completing the process and the number reconfirmed as prison gang members.

I would define it as being successful in that, number one, we've completed 2,500 offenders. We've reconfirmed 11. The recidivism rate, I'm sorry, I can't give you. That's one of those "I want to do this, but I haven't had time" things to do, because we get a great many of them that come back on a technical violation. I don't consider that a black mark against GRAD. The only thing I consider a black mark against GRAD is that they commit a

new crime. But again, it's really not, because *GRAD is not intended to keep them from getting out and committing new crimes*. GRAD is intended to get them out of the gangs into general population. What they do with the rest of their life is their own decision (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

(As mentioned earlier, although “getting out of the gang” is not an explicitly stated and overarching goal, reconfirmation – or an evidence-based finding of reclaimed gang membership – is one of the primary measures of success.)

Being able to peacefully coexist with other offenders unlike themselves is success, albeit a modified measure. Success “isn’t turning a lion into a lamb,” as an Ellis counselor articulated (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). Citing GRAD’s effectiveness “at teaching these guys how to respond to negative situations in population,” one teacher adopts a more realistic approach.

My standard success in prison is going to be different than my standard success with my children. I mean, I’ve got to adjust a little bit. If this guy’s going in Ad Seg for 25 years and hates a certain color of people, and then he can go out in population and get along with that “colored” person, then we’ve been successful. And we are successful from what I see (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Transforming inmates into “lambs” in prison is an improbability – besides, exposing such vulnerability in an environment governed by a “lion’s” code of conduct is antithetical to survival – but GRAD, according to one correctional officer, is successful at “putting out a better convict” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). A counselor at the Ellis Unit elaborated on this concept of success:

Counselor C.G.: Success is that they can get out and function as a normal member of the society they're in. So it doesn't mean that they're going to get out in population and not traffic and trade. It doesn't mean that they're not going to get out in population and have their little hustle. *It just means that they're going to be basically indistinguishable from all the other non-gang members....* So they're just going to be able to go out there and be non-gang members doing things that are really more of a nuisance than a risk or a threat. It's not going to be extorting or whatever. They might draw pictures or traffic and trade. They might iron somebody's clothes when they're in the laundry and make sure somebody gets ironed clothes. So they're not going to be changed into a lamb. The success is they're not causing problems any more than just the average inmate does.

Interviewer (Author): So they're just living as every other inmate.

Counselor C.G.: They're doing what they have to do to survive without really causing undo jeopardy to the system. And ideally, that's success. Now ideally, success is, "Okay, that's good enough" (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Whether characterized as ex-, former or non-active gang members, they have become "better convicts," able to carve out a life in the general prison population and, when necessary for survival, still abide by the convict code. Sometimes that may be "good enough" to qualify as success.

Respondents also attribute GRAD's success to its voluntary price of admission. One counselor confided that "nobody says it but me, but the reason it works is because these people volunteered to come to it....That's the biggest part of the whole thing" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). For example, if an offender refuses to participate in class or is otherwise non-compliant, the counselor gently reminds him that he has the choice to stay or go, even if "going" translates to an indefinite return to Ad Seg. As he explains, "That

keeps the ball in their court all the time. And all the other [TDCJ] programs are all, 'You *have to* go to drug [abuse counseling]. You *have to*.' And so they don't here. So these people actually have already surrendered to us when they get here....That's what I think makes the program work" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). An officer at the Ellis Unit agreed that the process can only work when the offender is "ready" to begin the journey.

I hate to say it because I'm in gray [correctional staff wear gray uniforms], but it works because of the offenders, because they have made that mindset that they want to change. And that's the only way it *will* work. They made that mindset that they want to go through this process, learn what they can, and absorb it like a sponge, and put it into effect in their lives. So, without them thinking like that and [being] willing to change, and have that willingness to change, that *want* to change, then it's not going to work....We can have 10,000 classes of stress and anger management. We can add religious classes. We can add more this class and that class. We can enforce rules, add all kinds of rules and stuff. But it's not going to work unless they...they have to be ready. They have to have that mindset (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Outside the Walls

One law enforcement official, however, painted a detailed picture of GRAD success that looks beyond the prison walls:

What does success look like to [TDCJ], and what does success look like to me? That is two different things. To them, say, we graduated 500 guys, for an example, this year, from GRAD. That's 500 guys that renounce the gang. That, to them, may be success, short term. You don't know what's going to happen to them, two, three, four, five years down the road. To me, flat out, success would be pretty clear cut: You're paroled from prison, finished the GRAD, left the gang, and [are] no longer in trouble. That's what success looks like to me. Again, I've only seen, maybe, one case like that, so far (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011).

The officer relayed a story of a GRAD offender and former “ranking lieutenant” in a Hispanic prison gang who had since been released from TDCJ. A few years post-release, the individual found himself employed and trouble-free; however, the officer conceded that this tentative success story “seems like the exception to the rule” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011). He elaborated:

When I said success is different to everybody, I mean, if you’re just talking sheer numbers, just because you put so many guys through GRAD, is that where you stop measuring success? “Okay, this is it, we’re finished. They were successful and graduated.” Okay, well, what’s going to happen the next three to five years, 10 years, with these guys? [...] *They stop being gang members, but they don’t stop being criminals. That’s two different things.* [Laughs] You’ve got one less gang member, but you still have the same amount of criminals, for the most part...[I]t would probably help to...define what success means for everybody, not just for the prison system when it comes to GRAD... (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011).

When the GRAD process began in 2000, parole and discharge were ethereal pipe dreams. Today, however, a GRAD offender paroling out of the system is no longer unfathomable. For instance, from January 2009 to March 2012, a total of nine Ramsey and 28 Ellis offenders were released from TDCJ while participating in the GRAD process. (See Table 5.7 for breakdown by unit and phase)

Table 5.7: Direct Release/Discharge from GRAD Units Mid-Phase, January 2009 to March 2012

	Ramsey Unit				Ellis Unit		
	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III		Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Date							
Nov. 2009			1				1
Jan. 2010							1
Feb. 2010							1
Mar. 2010						1	
Apr. 2010							
May 2010							4
June 2010							2
July 2010			1				1
Aug. 2010							
Sept. 2010							
Oct. 2010		1				1	1
Nov. 2010							1
Dec. 2010						1	
Jan. 2011							1
Feb. 2011			1				
Mar. 2011							
Apr. 2011						1	
May 2011		2					1
June 2011							1
July 2011						1	1
Aug. 2011							
Sept. 2011			1				
Oct. 2011			1			1	1
Nov. 2011			1		1		1
Dec. 2011						1	
Feb. 2012					1		1
TOTAL	0	3	6		2	7	19

With the release of GRAD offenders back into the community, broadening GRAD's goals and ideas of success from behind the walls to the free world is one worth considering if all interested and affected parties want to know if GRAD "works" and for whom.

MAXIMIZING SUCCESS BY MAXIMIZING SAFETY

Regardless of one's definition of success, to maximize the safety of GRAD offenders returning to general population – a criterion upon which everyone can agree – TDCJ sends them to one of several slower-paced units with “small gang populations” on the STGMO's recommended “safe list” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).²³⁸ According to the STGMO, offenders are sent to a “transition unit” upon GRAD completion, typically for a couple of years so they can “readjust to the general population [and] hopefully get a job,” and then to a “safety unit,” which will “probably...be their unit of assignment” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).²³⁹ Mr. A.P. in the STGMO explained that without the “support system” of GRAD, offenders are afforded an “adjustment period of their own without any real pressures or stresses of...a maximum [security] facility” (personal communication, January 4, 2012). TDCJ will not throw these offenders to the proverbial wolves to test their skills – to see if you really learned how to manage your anger, meet your new 22-year-old-suspected-street-gangster-with-poor-impulse-control-and-no-concept-of-personal-space cellmate! – but is giving them the best chance at staying out of the gang and out of segregation (including disciplinary segregation by being

²³⁸ Prior to expanding GRAD at the Ellis Unit, staff “cleansed the unit” of suspected and confirmed STG members to lessen the potential threat for GRAD participants. One of the officers explained that “now that we've been open for so long, we've flooded [the unit] with so many ex-gang members that the ex-gang members greatly outnumber the active gang members” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

²³⁹ When asked if the two-year, post-GRAD placement in a transitional unit was similar for any offender being released from Ad Seg, not just a prison gang member, the STGMO staff said it was “just for GRAD” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

“case-free”). The stakes are too high to risk the return on their GRAD investment.²⁴⁰

One of the law enforcement officers interviewed, Police Officer D.E., voiced the lone dissenting opinion on an offender’s success on a transitional or safety unit – and not for safety reasons, but rather for his criminal tendencies.

The criminal part is still there. I don’t care where you put them, if there’s money to be made illegally, well, then, you know, they’re gonna do it.... The only advantage that they have on a slower-paced unit is that...they don’t have to worry about competition and somebody trying to knock their head off. So it’s more, “I make more money. I’m still doing what I would be doing in a max unit, but I’m just more relaxed over here,” as opposed to having to deal with all these other issues on a max. But, you know, they still gotta do whatever they gotta do (personal communication, September 9, 2011).

But how does the system ensure an offender is safe, regardless of his placement? Is “blood in, blood out” still relevant and, if it is, what type of GRAD offender is more likely to be on the receiving end of a bloodletting? An offender’s role in the gang prior to renunciation may determine the actual versus perceived threat to his safety when he does renounce and completes GRAD. According to one law enforcement officer,

In this time and age, the prison gangs are less likely to do hits on offenders for leaving the gang, basically thinking it’s not worth the trouble. “If he wants to leave, leave.” That’s changed quite a bit. I know in the early days of prison gangs, there were usually severe consequences of a pretty bad beating or a killing for leaving; a “blood in, blood out” theory. But that’s not adhered to as much, I don’t think, as it used to. So there’s less of a threat, I think, sometimes. A lot of it depends on what the offender himself has done for the gang or with the gang. There’s guys

²⁴⁰ Where GRAD completers ultimately land is based on the recommendation of the agency’s classification committee (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

that have done a lot of criminal activities with the gangs inside or outside, they become a liability to the gang where...they say, "This guy ever debriefs, he's going to bring a lot of us down." Then those are the guys that they would target, probably, to maybe get killed because they would have a lot of information that would bring them down themselves, the other offenders. Then there's other offenders that really were low-level soldiers that never did much of anything, and their loss would not be considered such a high liability... (I.C., personal communication, September 9, 2012).

A GRAD officer at the Ellis Unit approached the topic of safety pragmatically, noting that "it ain't nothing to fill up" GRAD classes on both units.

You might have a few that'll come through here and kind of have a fear. This is why I know there's not really repercussions out there, because if there were really serious repercussions about it, then you'd have a lot more of these guys that are hesitant to come to GRAD....If there was a "blood in, blood out" type of deal, you wouldn't have that many....I have some with concerns, but very rare that somebody will come in and say, "I'm really worried about getting into population because I'm worried about my gang is going to retaliate." You just don't see it. Very rarely (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Arguably, if these offenders were returning to general population and being assaulted or routinely targeted, TDCJ would have tabled the process years ago. And if a GRAD offender in general population is the victim of an assault based on his former gang status, it might be more the result of a personal vendetta, and not ordered on behalf of the gang or "just because [he's] leaving the gang" (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).²⁴¹

²⁴¹ One officer recalled a GRAD completer being assaulted in general population; however, he was not targeted for being a former STG member. Instead, he had a tattoo on his stomach, the image of which tango gang members claim as their signature patch. When they told the offender he had to "cover that up," and the offender refused, they assaulted him (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Although the prison system can build in safety nets, whether it be a specified safe unit, or the reliance upon the changing nature of a violent, time-honored oath, one law enforcement officer maintains that the

idea of keeping an offender safe is an illusion because there is no such thing as keeping an offender safe. The only reason the gangs, prison gangs, do not go after ex-members *in* the prison system, is because you kill a convict, you automatically get a death sentence; you go for capital murder....So that's the reason that the gangs don't kill other gang members, ex-gang members. Not so much because the system is keeping them safe. It's because the system is making them pay, you know, pay dearly for...the repercussions of killing a convict... (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011).

MEASURING SUCCESS: WE NEED TO FORMALLY TRACK IT BEFORE WE COUNT IT

When the question, "Is GRAD effective?" was posed to Mr. A.P. in the STGMO, he responded, "Depends on what the terminology, of what the definition of 'effective' means." When advised he could define the term however he chose, he continued, "Does it give the person an opportunity to get out of Seg and go through classes and change some thinking? Yes, it's effective." He was reluctant to elaborate further when asked hypothetically how he would identify measures for assessing success and effectiveness at what GRAD is doing, if given the opportunity: "Success and effectiveness is just...it's not something that I am going to define." He then explained that one cannot extract the gang member from the individual, that one can only be a "gang member who is no longer active," and not a "former" or "ex-" gang member. He finally proposed one definition, but with a post-scripted shrug of the shoulders:

If success means they can get them out of Seg and then put them back in population, and they don't kill somebody, it's successful. And you're never going to have a measure of success unless they kill somebody, and then

you say it wasn't successful. So, how do you measure success? Don't know (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

He later recounted second-hand testimonials of GRAD offenders who had since been released from TDCJ and "communicated back to instructors and facilitators in GRAD" and "voiced their expressive appreciations in their successes" in the free world:

Our intent is to get them safely out of Seg into the population. I can't control what happens on the streets. But when you have people out on the streets who have gone through GRAD and have reported back their appreciation and success after incarceration, you know? If one success story is available, it has to be worth the efforts of the people (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, no formal tracking mechanism has been implemented to assess the success and effectiveness of the GRAD process. According to the STGMO, audit procedures are not currently in place to track GRAD completers who are still in TDCJ custody (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012; A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). When asked if such a paper trail had ever been a part of GRAD, administrative staff in the STGMO responded:

No, not unless there is a problem. So it's not a proactive follow-up. If somebody gets [assaulted back in general population] and they were GRAD, then we're going to look at it and see what the problem was....No, other than what's done on the unit level. I'm sure that the STG people on the unit level still look at these people just to be sure that they're not involved in any further gang activities. But as far as us auditing their success...[,] no..." (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

While admitting "it's a good idea" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012), the lack of staff and resources may leave it as an unfulfilled wish. Ms. T.G. later intimated that if the department is investing the time, money and effort

to transition the offenders from segregation, “we ought to be interested enough to see if it worked, to see if it truly worked, if it was a scam, or if they really have changed their ways and decided to do something else with their lives” (personal communication, January 4, 2012). Mr. A.P. in the STGMO expounded on the need for systematic data collection to evaluate GRAD's success and effectiveness – however the department chooses to define those concepts.

I think that there are ways to determine the success of the program in lots of ways, or the effectiveness of the program in lots of ways, and it's always evolving and changing. But if you don't have the ability to determine criteria and then be able to produce accurate data based upon specified criteria, then I don't think you really are getting an entire picture. Even though [GRAD] has been going on for 10 years, or more than 10 years, I am not sure why we don't have the ability to do some of these things. Other than either perhaps someone never wanted to, someone never thought about it, someone never asked. I don't know (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Adding to the difficulty in assessment are changes in the types of data that were gathered years ago (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). Even if TDCJ articulates what it wants to measure, that historical information may not be available.

A law enforcement officer also exposed the need for a GRAD program evaluation:

How much follow up is being done? How much research? From the time they started the GRAD to now, the guys that came initially to GRAD, where are they now? What are they doing? If they're on the streets, how are they doing? I don't know how much follow up is being done on that....The ones that are still in, how are they doing? How are they coping? The guys that are on the streets, how are they coping? Then you can start talking about, okay, how successful are we being overall in the big picture, not just short term, based on graduating members (I.C.,

personal communication, September 26, 2012)?

Respondents also expressed different beliefs on the existence (or lack) of an audit procedure. For instance, GRAD officers at the Ellis Unit acknowledged that they informally monitor GRAD completers who are placed in general population on their unit (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012; H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Officer B.D. takes it upon himself to follow up with them:

Every once in a while I might bring one in here and just talk to them. "How's things going out there? Are you still feeling like you did when you left here? Things changed?" I've seen some that I've let out, and they end up over here on medium custody or close custody, and I say, "You've fallen right back in the same thing you fell into the last time that ended you back in Seg." You talk to them a little bit (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

However, Officer B.D. stated that "Huntsville downtown tracks them throughout the state while they're locked up in the prison system" (personal communication, January 10, 2012), contrary to what the STGMO staff maintain. An officer at the Ramsey Unit said that when a GRAD completer is transferred to a new unit, he is accompanied by a "big folder" that chronicles his behavior and history in the prison. The "STG sergeant at the arriving unit receives that information, gets the lowdown on this offender, brings him in so he can get a look at him, and from that point on, just keeps an eye on him" (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Although it is not mandatory that the new STG sergeant acquaints himself with his new charge, Officer M.R. asserts that

it's good, sound correctional practice to do that. We don't want to say, "Okay, he's an ex-member, let's forget all about him." You never know, because he was a gang member at one time. At any given time, he may

revert back to that. We just want to keep an eye on him to make sure... (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Continued monitoring allows the offender more time to practice what he learned in GRAD – and allows TDCJ more time to assess sincerity and the degree to which the offender truly has been resocialized.

And, unlike the STGMO's belief that the "STG people on the unit level still look at these people" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012), a law enforcement officer with intimate knowledge of the STG officers' role on the unit explained that their duties might preclude them from placing the monitoring of GRAD completers high on their list of priorities:

To really have complete overview and complete supervision over these GRAD [completers] is that the gang sergeant has to read mail, has to do searches, has to do incoming chain [i.e., assist with the intake of new offenders to the unit], at 9:30 he has to go run chow [i.e., work in the cafeteria and supervise offenders during mealtimes] for three hours, you know, then he has to go do the incoming mail for evening. And so you've got all these things that are piled on the gang sergeant that he has to do, or she has to do, and there's no way that they can really supervise those guys [GRAD offenders who have been returned to the general population] (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011).

TARGET POPULATION: MYTH OR REALITY?

As discussed in Chapter 3, opinions on the target population for potential GRAD recruits vary, depending upon whom one asks. Should the system target offenders at specific stages in their sentences that might increase their chances at resocialization, or does the voluntary nature of the process itself, and its reliance on inmates recognizing their own readiness, preclude anyone from being dismissed as a possible candidate?

In the past, TDCJ's "philosophy" on potential GRAD offenders was they had to have spent a minimum of five years in segregation before being admitted to GRAD "in order to appreciate being in Seg" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012) and being given a second chance. One STGMO staff countered an earlier claim that admission to GRAD was originally "first come, first serve" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012), clarifying that

the process changed a little bit at the beginning because there were so many of them. We tried to work it on length of sentence [and] date of projected release. In other words, if we had a Mexican Mafia that was in for life, then we're going to let a [Texas Syndicate member] that's getting out in five years go to GRAD first (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Today, offenders with two years in segregation are renouncing and cycling through the process, albeit with greater difficulty completing it successfully than older offenders who had spent considerably longer in Ad Seg.

GRAD officers at both the Ellis and Ramsey Units distance themselves from the belief that TDCJ should target any specific type of offender to participate. Officer M.R., admitting that he once thought offenders nearing the end of their sentences should be recruited for GRAD, now believes that "whenever these offenders come to the realization that they're ready to renounce their affiliation, whether it's with a couple of years left...or 30 years left..., whenever they decide," is when they should initiate the admission process (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Officer H.G. agreed:

I don't think we should target anybody to get them here, because I *want* them to *want* to come. And I want them to *want* it, to be ready for it, to have that mindset, "I'm ready for it. I don't care what they do to me. I don't care how strict they are." I've had plenty of inmates that tell me that, say, "You can take all my property, you can do whatever, but I'm going to get through this process." I love that. *This inmate is ready*. Not that I'm going to do all that to him, but he's telling me right off the bat, "I'm willing to do anything to get through this process" (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Sentence length was the criterion of choice for one law enforcement officer interviewed. Police Officer I.C. proposed that offenders with longer prison sentences who complete GRAD earlier in their incarceration will "give you a lot less problems...because the guy understands, 'Okay, I may never get out of [prison], so I don't want to be in Ad Seg the rest of my time here.' There's a deterrent there: 'I have to behave, I have to do good'..." (personal communication, September 26, 2011), or else segregation becomes his future once again.

REASONS TO RENOUNCE

The reasons for renunciation guide and influence offenders' success in GRAD; inherent in each are the individual incentives for completing the process.

I Want a Hug

The simple mantra, "I want to hug my mother, my kids, my family" was repeated throughout the interviews by both educational and security staff as a primary reason to renounce. The promise of a contact visit, the first in years for many, nourishes the offenders during the nine-month process and helps sustain their enthusiasm and dedication. As one teacher explains, "There's a guy in my

class that just wrote in his journal he is waiting for their 'blue band' day. That's when they get rid of their orange and get their blue on, and he will hug his mother the first time in about 23 years" (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Another officer described how GRAD participation can potentially reverse the loss of family support over the years. Family visits take on a more important role in renunciation, with getting out of segregation an added bonus.

They can get a visit while they're in segregation, but it's behind a glass window. When you have to see your mom or your dad or your sister or your kids come up here, and you can't even touch them, god damn, that's kind of hard. And when they've got to where they've been in there for several years, I think that plays a big role. I think a lot of it, too, is the family members, they start getting where they probably don't come as much. They start losing that support when they're back there in Seg, a lot of them. Because they just don't want to come and see them in the glass window or whatever. So I think it plays a big role for them to be able to get out. I got a class that's fixing to go out to population Thursday. And half of them say, "Man, I'm going to get to go hug my mom this weekend." Because as soon as they get to population that first weekend, they get to go have a contact visit. And they get excited about that....I said, "When you go on a visitation this weekend, and you hold your mom or your daughter who you haven't held in 15 years, that's the kind of stuff you got to think about." They'll start tearing up just sitting in the classroom talking about it. So I think that's a lot of it with the family members (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Even the class speaker chosen to provide the testimonial on behalf of his group at the Ellis Unit completion ceremony in January 2012 admitted the "payoff" was hugging his family.²⁴²

²⁴² Completion ceremonies at the Ellis Unit no longer include individual student testimonials. Only one offender per graduating class is selected to stand before the graduating groups, family members, invited guests, and Phases II and III participants and say a few words about the process, thank their collective families for their unwavering support, express their gratitude toward the teachers and counselors, or gently rib the GRAD security staff. At the Ramsey Unit, each

Family member support, before, during and after GRAD, plays a key role in the decision to renounce; blood may begin to trump brotherhood after all.²⁴³ The ultimate renunciation of the prison gang and its “blood in, blood out” oath is putting one’s blood family first, as one STGMO official explains that it is not family pressure to renounce, but rather the offenders

finally realize that the gang isn’t their family, that they’re really not going to be there for them. That the truth is, is the same thing your mother and my mother tells me: The only thing that you have is family. A lot of them...it’s just harder for them to realize that, and they have to go through more than I and you might have had to do to realize that. Family’s the only thing that ever stands behind you if they can. The gang won’t (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

But there are exceptions to the rule. One inmate’s participation in GRAD meant an end to any future family reunions. Although some offenders profess that GRAD “gave them life” and “brought their families back together” (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012), teacher J.T. shared the story of one former inmate:

I did have one student, though, that the family totally dropped him because he went through this process. The whole family is so much into

offender still takes his place at the podium and is allowed to individually address his family and guests. (However, offenders in Phases II and III no longer participate in the ceremonies at the Ramsey Unit.)

²⁴³ One counselor shared a story about a 60-year-old GRAD student who is “never get[ting] out” of prison and whose decision to renounce was based on his son’s personal testimony: “I’ve got an old man in the group right now. He hasn’t changed much. Oh, he’ll say he’s changed, but he’s got one son on death row, and he’s got one son who came through GRAD, who completed [it]; he’s at [another unit in East Texas] right now, and that kid’s doing the best that he can, trying to do right. He’s in his 30s. And the old man, the only reason he came through GRAD is because that son told him that GRAD works. But the old man, he’s really having a hard time. He’s accepting it now, but he thinks it’s all a bunch of crap... (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

gang activity. In fact, they threatened him and other family members if they had any communication with him....I have no idea where he is or what his story is. I know that he was to have paroled to a relative in [another state], and the family had warned them not to do that (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

While many respondents cited family as a motive to renounce, teacher J.E. labels that reason “misguided” and not sufficient to sustain the offender throughout the process:

They like to say they’re doing it for their family, but that’s another one I don’t put a lot of stock in. Because I think, ultimately, if you’re going to change a behavior or a principle that leads to a behavior, you have to change for you. I can’t change for a baby. I can’t change for the kids. I got one right now that really commits that he’s going to change for his child, and I told him yesterday, “I think you’re misguided. I think you’re gonna have to change for you.” It has to be about me. I have to be ready in my heart to change. And the moment that happens, and the light switch goes off, they’ll change. And if they don’t, they won’t. Some of them don’t ever make it (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

I Want Out of Seg

The immediate positive consequence of renunciation is geographic: the physical relocation from any given unit’s Ad Seg to a GRAD wing at the Ramsey or Ellis Unit. But the journey is more transformative than just a change of address. Counselor C.G. states “the most common” reason he has heard is “to get out of that box. You know, that box 23 hours a day, and then it’s not just the box. It’s what the box represents. It represents a total loss of opportunity” (personal communication, January 11, 2012). They are able to find opportunity and “freedom” in prison once they make it to GRAD (R.C., personal

communication, January 6, 2012; A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). As one STGMO official explains,

There's a better lifestyle for a population inmate than he could ever [be] afford[ed] in Seg. Sometimes it's easier to be poor and free than rich and confined....Because that's what they want more than anything else, is just the freedoms. Fresh air. Just the ability to be outside. Even some of them want to work outside in the fields, just because they don't have any confinement out there. It's hard work, it's back-breaking work, perhaps. But they would rather be there than inside, working the jobs, because it's no confinement compared to what they've been in (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

The contrary view that freedom can be found in prison is a greater incentive for the segregated inmate than for one in general population who takes these privileges (i.e., telephone calls, contact visits, educational programs, television, etc.) for granted. The release from segregation promises a better life, even in prison, because they now have “more opportunities out there. They can go to college. They can go to school. Go work at a job. Try to learn a trade. Get out in the field [to work]” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

I Want to Watch TV

Sometimes the motivation to renounce is not the result of an existential crisis, self-reflection, or the encouragement of family, but a desire for something seemingly trivial: television. The occasional offender has stated this as his reason to renounce and transfer from Ad Seg, although admittedly not the worthiest motivator.

I've also heard, you know, sounds kind of ridiculous, I've heard one, or maybe two, one I can think of right off hand, that said that the reason they did it was so that they could watch TV. And, I'm like, “Okay, well,

whatever your motivation is, if it gives you enough motivation.” [...] You have to understand that some of them have been in Seg for quite a while and have not had access to a TV. I mean, it’s been a culture shock to them. They’re 23 hours a day locked down with not much to do to occupy their mind....So, it’s a change. That’s why I said it’s kind of funny the guy that said, “I’m doing this so I can watch TV” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Watching television moves “beyond the entertainment value” and escapism, and is introduced into the GRAD curriculum as a “good socialization tool” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

TV [and] the videos are actually the most effective teaching tool that I have at my disposal. It’s not the video itself. It’s the fact that they want to watch the video, and it’s a reward to watch the video. And what they don’t understand is art imitates life. Anything that you can know or think in society is going to be reflected in the video somewhere....If you can get into the habit of watching it to learn, you can learn correct behavior, and you can also see incorrect behavior modeled in shows on TV....Like I said, the thing where you put them in Seg with nothing but cell warriors yelling and cussing each other and threatening to beat each other up. So, in the cell, I’m like, “You ought to put a TV in there and show them [that “this is life, this is what life is”] (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

In GRAD, television and videos are no longer passive activities, but a reflection of life and a catalyst for change.

I Want to Make Parole

Being looked at “a lot more favorably” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) by parole was also cited by both instructors and security staff as a fundamental reason to renounce. Counselor C.G. has repeatedly heard offenders say, ““They won’t parole me out of Seg”” (personal communication, January 11, 2012). An officer at the Ellis Unit explained that “[in] segregation, you can’t get parole. They’re not going to give it to you. They’re going to make

you do your whole time. You're a gang member, and when you go up for parole, they're going to see that you're an active gang member, and they're going to deny you pretty much every time" (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012). When the inmates arrive at GRAD, one of the counselors always asks, "Why are you here?" Without missing a beat, "100% of them" reply, "I'm here to get the tag [STG label] off" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Once completing GRAD and transferring to general population, the "majority" of GRAD completers with whom one officer has supervised have lengthy sentences to serve before parole eligibility is an option. He has had a "few that have maybe five years left" upon graduating from GRAD, and admits that "parole will see that they went through GRAD and be more lenient to let them out versus them still being in Seg" (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

I Don't Want Today's Gang

As discussed in Chapter 2, the gang dynamics have changed over the years. In the past, cultural pride, a sense of brotherhood, and the extreme loyalty of the "old regime," all fronted by criminal activity, were the party line.

I Don't Want the New Kids on the Block

An officer at the Ramsey Unit provided an historical perspective on GRAD offenders, identifying the changes in participants as a result of the changes in the gangs themselves.

What we're seeing now in GRAD is we're kind of scraping the bottom of the barrel. What I mean by that is back in 2000 when this program was launched, what we saw was the opportunity for many gang members who had been in Ad Seg for upwards of 20 years, 15, 16, 17 years, from the

early '80s when we started locking down all the gang members, the original gang members. When we originally initiated a lockdown in the early '80s, they've been in Seg all that time. And finally in 2000, the time arrived for them to come out. What we saw was the old regime of gang members who initiated the whole STG, what we see today: the original Texas Syndicate and Mexican Mafia, Aryan Brotherhood [of Texas], all these others. They finally had the opportunity to come out. They came out because, "Look, I've already renounced my membership. I think I've served my time with whatever gang I was involved with. I just want to ride the rest of my time out." You could see that we were having a lot of older offenders, more seasoned, if you will. They kind of saw the whole thing, and they're kind of just coming through the program (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Prompted by "all these newer, young kids coming in here, taking over the gangs" (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012), older members, who had abided by codes of honor and respect, began to renounce. The present no longer resembled their rose-tinged past. As Officer M.R. explained,

Now what we see is the younger generation, which is what the older gang members say, "These guys are the reason I got out of the gang because things are not done the way they used to be." So what we have now, primarily, is a bunch of newly incarcerated [gang members]....And when I say "newly," within the past decade or so, which, from our standpoint, within the past decade is really not much to be locked up. '99 or 2000 or 2001 or whatever is not really that long ago in terms of being incarcerated, unfortunately that's not that [much]. So they really haven't the sense, they being the offenders who were locked up and joined the gang and consequently got locked up, don't really have a sense of what it is to be a part of one of these gangs. They don't uphold, although they have their constitutions, their little by-laws and everything that govern everything they do, everything is kind of...it's different. Just like any job, I guess. You leave your job and you come back 20 years later, it's going to be different. But it's kind of that way. And these new arrivals that we're getting,...] they're just thugs. They have no sense of dedication or honor in what they do. In a crazy way, back then there was some honor in what they did. Things were carried out, and that's just the way it was done. Whether it was right or wrong, it doesn't matter....They were upholding their standard, what they were supposed to do (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The introduction of the newer and younger offenders, the “Pepsi Generation” (Hunt et al., 1993), has confused and disrupted the order imposed by the gang and convict codes. An officer at the Ellis Unit emphasized this point:

I think the biggest reason that I've heard is a lot of them say it's not the same anymore. The gangs are not what they used to be. There's no loyalty. There's no anything. Everybody's just trying to look out for themselves. It's not about a family anymore. When I'm talking to the older offenders, that's what it's about (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

I Don't Want the Lies

For some offenders, recognizing that they have been conned and used to do the gang's bidding makes the idea of renunciation palatable. It took a casual conversation among STG peers in the “rec yard” for one offender to realize that the gang life was all smoke and mirrors and not at all what he originally believed it was:

We had one guy, and...he got 60 years. He's in prison somewhere here. He was from [another state], and he was one of the ones who was a killer. He said he was out on the rec yard in Seg, and he went over to two of his own gang members and asked them, well, who did they kill? They looked at him and started laughing. “We never killed nobody, and we're not going to. Who'd be that stupid?” And, you know, he had no money. He will never have no money. He's never had family. He has nothing. But he said that's why he renounced, because he said they were just using him; that he saw it for what it really was. They were just using him, and he was tired of being used. He's his own person. He wanted to be his own person, and he wants to be his own self (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

A former Texas Syndicate member, according to Police Officer D.E., arrived at a similar realization that gang politics no longer made sense.

[He] told me, “You know, I’m in prison for not obeying the rules of society, but here I have a rapist, a child molester, telling me to go hurt this other guy for no apparent reason other than dislike and politics, and, you know, I couldn’t obey the rules of society, and that is why I am in prison, but I’m obeying *his* orders, of a convict just like me.” Part of his reasoning was like, “Why am I doing this” (personal communication, September 9, 2011)?

One teacher noted that although some offenders will say they renounced to “get out of Seg,” once they become immersed in the GRAD process, navigate the curriculum and complete the assignments, “many of them have a real defining moment...because they do a lot of reflection here, and they want a better life. They realize that the gang life was a lie, and it hasn’t turned out to be what they were told” (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

For others, a certain maturity and wisdom precipitate the decision to renounce.

A lot of them just get tired of the politics in the gang business. A lot of them tell me that they’ve finally just opened their eyes. They just grew up. They knew that what the gang life they thought was supposed to be, really wasn’t it. They thought they’d have power and all this other stuff. And it was all a facade what they were telling them. It was just not for them (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

For those yet to realize this, or for those who are still getting needs met by the gang – “if you’re getting something, you’re not willing to give it up” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012) – renunciation is not an option.

DECISION TO RENOUNCE AND THE INCREASED CHANCES OF GRAD SUCCESS: RACE, AGE, LENGTH OF TIME IN Ad SEG, AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF GRAD COMPLETION

Success, however narrowly or broadly defined, also depends upon the race, age and length of time in Ad Seg, all of which may influence the decision to

renounce, the experience in the classroom, and the potential to complete the process.

Race Differences

Several officers at both Ramsey and Ellis Units (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012; B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012; L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012; M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012; H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) report no discernible differences in completion or removal rates among the different races represented in the GRAD-eligible STGs – it is equal opportunity removal and completion for all – instead reiterating that “[it] doesn’t matter on the *gang*; it matters on the person. It’s all about the individual and where his mindset is. If his mindset is set on the right reasons, he’s going to succeed” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

As previously mentioned, only a small number of African-American STG members (Bloods and Crips) in Ad Seg because of their gang activity have renounced and completed GRAD. In January 2012, only one African-American offender (out of 177 Ramsey GRAD participants at the time) was going through the process. One officer identified “loyalty” as a reason why more administratively segregated Bloods and Crips forgo renunciation and remain single-celled (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Prison, according to an Aryan Brotherhood of Texas member and convicted murderer, is a “racist environment” (Hyde, 2008), but in GRAD, these racial and ethnic differences among offenders – in number and ideology – become teachable moments and fodder for group discussion. The units have been able to use these race differences as opportunities to explore diversity in prison. Officer B.D. recounted a story of an older, White offender who called a “tall [and] muscular” African-American GRAD inmate a highly offensive and derogatory name, expecting him to retaliate, get caught, and be removed. Staff removed neither, admonishing the White offender, “Hey, you made your bed, and now you got to lay in it. You can’t be calling folks that and expect not to have some kind of repercussion behind it.” Eventually the White offender’s plan backfired, as he “ended up getting himself get kicked out anyway by doing some stupid stuff” and failed to realize that if “you [are] going to go out and say a word like that, you better be ready to hang in there for the long haul, buddy” (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Teacher J.E. presents a primer on the individual characteristics of each race, observing that the White offenders tend to be explosive in nature, the Hispanics culturally proud, and the African-Americans “reserved”:

The White guys tend to be the ones, in my opinion, that are more volatile, quick to blow up in the classroom, quick to anger, and really caught up on this thing they call pride. And they don’t know what pride is. I make them look it up and we discuss it. They don’t even really know what it is. It’s the opposite of pride that they’re hung up on. The Hispanic guys...how do I describe them? They have a pride, a “brown pride,” but there’s is a

different deal. They will tell you that their gangs are more violent than White gangs, and they take a certain pride in that. "Blood in, blood out." The Black guys that I've had – I've had three – and they're very quiet, very reserved in their opinions because they're outnumbered so extremely large. And I think that plays a big role in it. An interesting quote: "White guys really dislike Black guys. White guys tend to get along pretty well with some of the Hispanic guys, and some of the Hispanic guys just really hate the White guys." So you've got a good mix of everything. But the Mexican gangs tend to pride themselves on the brutal[ity] of the crimes. That's one of [their trademarks] (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Sharing similar views, counselor F.W. reflects on his experiences with White and Hispanic offenders, and how they manage in class.

If there's going to be trouble in the room, most of them will be White men....If there's going to be a – I don't know another language to use – if there's going to be a smartass in the room, it's going to be a White male. He'll probably be between 35 and 50. And you can take that to the bank. [Laughs] [....] Has to do with his background....It's Aryan thinking. The Aryan Brotherhood. It's ideology....They are superior. I have a different definition of Aryan thinking than a lot of people have. Aryan thinking is...not about Whites. It's associated with Whites, but it's not really about Whites. It's about superiority. Because I've had Aryan people look down on me as much as they have any other, you know, any African-American or any other person. I am...inferior. I'm a bug to them....And that's Aryan-type thinking. It's just an enormous ego thing....Generally speaking, I'll make them mad because I am so rational and so logical....So you'll get them if you hang in there with them. A lot of them change, and when they change, they're the leader of the pack. You want to look for them. Some of those are real powerful. And even Hispanics respect them. They're the leaders. And that's who you want to change. Boy, when they change, they'll bring everybody along, because everybody either respects them or is scared of them, one or the other. And that's hard to tell....The Hispanics will be quiet. They're more reserved....Just different culture....The older ones will be wiser. The older Hispanics will be wiser. They make wise statements; they've got some years on them. They've figured some stuff out. You don't run into very many old White prisoners that are really that kind of wise (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Officer B.D. agrees that the Hispanic inmates are “more reserved” or “maybe won’t let out as much feeling,” and the White offenders are “more outspoken.” (“We had one [White offender] that got in trouble yesterday. As soon as he got in trouble, he went in there and he was telling the whole class about it, right? Whereas, I’ve seen some Hispanics, you get in there and you get on their butt, they go back in there, and they won’t say nothing. They’ll just sit down and have their head hung low” [personal communication, January 10, 2012].)

One officer has observed offenders in GRAD grouping up by race, but not by former prison gang, during unstructured recreation. Former Mexican Mafia members will be “hanging around with [former] Texas Syndicate [and] HPL.” Not the sole purview of Hispanic offenders, he acknowledged that “sometimes the White offenders do it, too.” The informal associations in the rec yard are labeled as “not a gang thing [but] a race thing” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). One is again reminded that, in prison, race and ethnicity are defining characteristics, and group formation is a fluid and natural process, regardless of environment.

Age Differences

When asked if there were any noticeable differences among offenders based on age, one counselor indicated that the older offenders were better students. Characterizing them as “more receptive...and more willing to listen and more willing to actually get it,” he surprised himself with this revelation:

Normally, you think, “Well, you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” I mean, this is contrary to what I would normally believe – they’re going to be more set in their ways and less apt to change. But the only thing I can ascribe that to is that they’ve actually felt enough pain that they’re ready to give it up. They’re ready to learn a new trick, whatever it takes (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Unlike counselor C.G.’s experience, a counselor at the Ramsey Unit has “found most of the old men are not as pliable, not as flexible as the younger. They are more set in their ways” (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Older GRAD offenders are also perceived to be “more dedicated to [the process] than the younger offenders,” according to Officer J.S., because the younger are “not really gangsters” – they “want to have that label” as proof of their “tough[ness]” – whereas the older offenders have lived it, breathed it, killed for it, and now have chosen to disassociate from it. The older offenders still retain their old school gang mentality, though, and “pretty much stay to themselves,” unlike the younger generation that does not know “how to be quiet” and is “rebellious all the time” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Officer H.G. classified the younger offenders as “more aggressive...towards each other” and less willing to abide by the GRAD rules (personal communication, January 10, 2012); hence, the “larger amount of inmates that we remove from GRAD are the younger offenders” (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Ad Seg as Deterrent Against Removal and Preparation for Resocialization: How to Get Solitary to Work for You

The concept of deterrence embodies the pleasure-pain principle, whereby “humans are rational with free will and seek to minimize pain and maximize pleasure” (Sheldon, 2004, p. 8). The deterrent effect applies to not only the punishment of “prison” itself, but also the “pains of imprisonment” (Sykes, 1958, p. 107) that compound a sentence in segregation (such as not being able to hug family members, as respondents indicated was one reason offenders sought renunciation). As an STGMO official iterated several years ago, “The reason [GRAD] works is *because* of Ad Seg. They’ve gone through the worst. That’s the real deterrent” (P.F., personal communication, July 6, 2007).

The length of time in segregation provides the motivation to renounce and the determination to succeed in GRAD, according to several GRAD officers and instructors. When GRAD began in 2000, offenders had spent considerable time in prison and segregation prior to their decision to renounce. Teachers and counselors commented on the number of years those inaugural GRAD offenders had spent in Ad Seg: Counselor F.W. estimated it to be “anywhere from 15 to 25 years” (personal communication, January 10, 2012); Teacher J.T. recalled “about 10 to 12 years in Seg” (personal communication, January 5, 2012); Teacher J.E. identified the “minimum to be either 10 or 15 years” (personal communication, January 11, 2012); and Counselor L.C. said it was “anywhere from 15 to 20 years in Seg” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Today, however, the STGMO reports the “average Ad Seg time is two years” before matriculating into a GRAD group (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). The expansion to the Ellis Unit in 2008 is one explanation for offenders having to spend far fewer years in segregation before admission. As Officer H.G. explains,

Back when Ramsey was doing it by themselves, inmates were having to wait a lot longer. They were having to wait five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten years to get to GRAD. Like I said, they spent more time in Seg. So when [GRAD at the Ellis Unit] first started in 2008, yeah, we were getting all these inmates that had been locked up 15, 20, 25 years, and they were a lot more appreciative, and acted a lot better, and followed the rules a lot better (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Others have noticed that fewer years in segregation equates to greater difficulty in finishing GRAD. Attributing some of these differences to age – that is, those offenders with fewer years in Ad Seg are often younger offenders²⁴⁴ – several respondents noted that these inmates are “kind of amateurish” in comparison to the longer-segregated offenders who had “been there and done that” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012), and are “not ready to make a change” or “serious about the program” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). According to Officer H.G.,

²⁴⁴ Youth is indeed relative. One respondent classified “anything under 30” as young and “anything over 40” as “old” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). An officer agreed that “30 to 40,” while “not *really* young,” is considered young in GRAD (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). And one counselor distanced himself from an age range, instead asserting that the “older guy in the class” is his definition of old, regardless of age (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Now we're getting inmates [who...] don't have to wait hardly no time, let's say. They're, basically, two, three years in Seg, and boom, they're coming to GRAD. And yeah, they act a lot different. We're kicking a lot more out because they're not following the rules. They're just being more disrespectful to our staff, and just being hardheads (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

These "hardheads" have the opportunity to be recycled (that is, participate in a future GRAD group, granted they continue to meet the eligibility requirements), as their relative youth and shorter stints in segregation demand repeated efforts before successfully completing the process. The STGMO staff explained that

they may complete the program, but more than likely they are going to have gone more than one time. They are going to have been removed for a disciplinary or for some [other] reason, and then lived in disciplinary [segregation], and then gone back to GRAD, rather than having completed GRAD the first time out (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

One counselor applauded the effort, admitting that these younger offenders with less time in segregation

need to be thrown back. Because they haven't done enough time yet. They need to go back and *do time*. They haven't done any time. So they're still hardheaded jackasses. Sorry, but...They're still the "real world [i.e., the free world or society outside of prison]," and they're going to do the "real world" in here if they can. You know, they can get their cigarettes...[,] they just want to get to [general population] so they can do their cigarettes, get dope, [...] do whatever. They're still playing a game. But not those [who have done much more time in prison and segregation] (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Citing a greater "appreciation" for GRAD, several respondents identified the time spent in segregation as vital to success in completing the process and returning to general population (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012; A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012; J.T., personal communication,

January 5, 2012; H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Teacher J.T. observed that offenders who spent more time in Ad Seg “tend to be more grateful to have this experience than those that were only there for three or four years” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Counselor L.C. credited “time in prison and...in segregation” as the “most important factor” in promoting change (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Officer H.G. noted that the longer-segregated “tend to act better” and, when given the opportunity to come to GRAD,

they appreciate it more...versus those inmates who have only been [in Ad Seg] two years [who] come out, and they have an attitude like we owe them something. And they’re not very appreciative of their newfound freedom, their second chance. But the ones that have been locked up, they’ve got all that, I don’t know if I can say this, “piss and vinegar” out of them already. They got a whole new attitude (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Ad Seg, however, may not take the emotional fight out of the offender; instead, it leaves him with “pain” as a key motivation to complete GRAD, according to counselor C.G.: “Without pain, there’s not going to be change. If you feel enough pain, you get motivated to change. Until you feel that pain, until you hit the bottom, and it’s not just a false bottom, you just absolutely can’t go any lower, that’s the pain” (personal communication, January 11, 2012). Recounting past conversations with another counselor whose tenure in GRAD exceeded his own, counselor C.G. elaborated:

[Counselor F.W.] said there’s a big difference between two and five or 10 and 20 [years in segregation]. He said the guys in 20 – again the pain

theory – have had enough pain in that box, they really are receptive to learning some other way than being in a box. The guys who are two to five have not always felt that much pain. Some of them have, but some of them just haven't gotten it yet. They don't realize the gravity of the situation (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Mr. A.P. in the STGMO summarized the time-in-Ad-Seg and successful-GRAD-completion relationship this way:

Over the course of 10 years that GRAD's been in operation, those offenders who have successfully completed the course, you would find a very common denominator in the fact that there was a lot of years spent in Seg. Today, classes are not as successful, completion of the original 16 [offenders] that went to the class. I have not graduated an original class [with all 16 or 20 offenders] in a long time, the entire class. It just does not fit anymore. The only dynamic difference between today and 10 years ago that you can really put a handle on is the differences in time spent in Ad Seg then versus the time spent in Ad Seg now (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Applying Clemmer's (1940) concept of prisonization to Ad Seg (and substituting "Ad Seg" for "prison" for purposes of this study), offenders who spend less time in prison (i.e., Ad Seg) do not undergo a complete assimilation. It is therefore believed that their readjustment to the free world (i.e., general population) will be easier. Officer B.D. detailed the different levels of resocialization based on length of time in Ad Seg, where those inmates who had endured 10 to 20 years in segregation "don't know how to act when they get here [to GRAD]":

When I first started with GRAD, we were getting more offenders that were 10, 15, 20 years in segregation in the gangs, and now we're getting them, they've only two or three years or five years in a gang versus back then. That's another thing for the different type of inmate we're getting. The ones who've been in Seg for 15, 20 years, when they come out here they

don't know how to act. They're kind of skittish around people because they've been in the box for 20 years. You get them in a classroom setting or a rec setting, especially at first, you can walk in here during rec time, [and] they're standing in the corner somewhere because they don't know how to act when they get here. They don't know what to expect....Nowadays the inmates that you get in here now, you don't see a whole lot of that because they were in population three years ago, and they got confirmed, and as soon as they got confirmed [and placed in Ad Seg], they said, "I want to be out of the gang," and here it is three years later, and they're going through this program. It's not like they spent a whole lot of time in segregation. They can come back out here and blend in just as quick as they went to Seg. They can come back out here and blend back just as easy with whoever's out there. That's the difference now. You just don't have a whole lot of ones coming through who've been locked up in Seg for a long time (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Despite not knowing "how to act," one law enforcement officer contends that "older gang members" in Ad Seg who have been incarcerated longer are "able to adjust...easier [to being rehabilitated] than the youngest guys in Ad Seg" (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011).²⁴⁵ He offered an example:

[This individual] did 19 years in Ad Seg as a Texas Syndicate member, came out to the free world and, of course, picked up where he left off with the gang in the free world. But ultimately he was one of the few cases that I can honestly say [that] either way would have been good in or out of Seg. But he actually ended up being rehabilitated and is actually doing very well for himself now. Mind you, he never went through the GRAD process, but he did spend a lot of time in Ad Seg. But it's just a different frame of mind, a different discipline that these guys have developed over the years (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

²⁴⁵ The officer did acknowledge that the "indoctrination [into] the Ad Seg world" can do psychological damage, and can "make them or break them."

He identified the “discipline” with which the *veteranos*, as opposed to the younger “Pepsi Generation,” embraced in their ability to acclimate and thrive in segregation. In the past,

[t]heir recruiting was more stringent. The gang was more selective in who they recruited bringing in. They were looking for guys that were, I just want to say smarter, that were more disciplined and more mature in their way of thinking than they are now. And I think that plays out...when they’re mentally stronger they’re able to adapt and cope with the administrative segregation end of it. Again, because they would target guys that were more, I guess in their terminology, “hardcore” guys that could do time in administrative segregation and not be affected (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

Like the prison system itself, gangs also use Ad Seg as a management tool to weed out the younger from the older, the liabilities from the disciplined.

REMOVAL FROM GRAD

For some, time in segregation may have instilled the desire to get out of the box, but once they are tapped for GRAD, and the big toe is dipped in the water, it may prove to be too much, too soon. And so they find themselves removed from the GRAD wing, either voluntarily or non-voluntarily.

The success of GRAD has been couched in terms of emptying segregation beds, teaching offenders different ways to think and act, and reconfirming former GRAD offenders (i.e., returning to one of the 12 identified STGs after renouncing), yet the total number of offenders removed from the nine-month process receives less publicity as a defined measure. Because the transition from Ad Seg offender to general population inmate is a methodical one,

it is to be expected that some offenders might have difficulty traversing the path. On the surface, a removal might be synonymous with failure; however, not all removals are created equal. TDCJ records five types of removals: (1) disciplinary (i.e., disciplinary infractions), (2) voluntary, (3) administrative (i.e., “no-fault” removals [that are] usually [for] an inmate who is transferred to a medical facility or who leaves TDCJ custody on a bench warrant, etc.” [N.J., personal communication, April 3, 2012]), (4) FI-R votes (i.e., the inmate has “received favorable parole approval” [N.J., personal communication, April 3, 2012]),²⁴⁶ and (5) release or discharge.

Limited data were provided; only complete information for Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011 for each unit was available, and partial data for Fiscal Year 2012 (September 2011-March 2012). (See Tables 5.8 through 5.10) Living with a cellmate after years of being isolated and not needing to compromise or becoming conditioned to sharing or tolerating another's perceived substandard hygiene or idiosyncratic behavior proves the challenge – for data presented from September 2009 through March 2012, Phase II (the true test begins when they wake up and realize they are sharing a cell) witnesses a greater number of removals than either Phase I (they take comfort in the familiarity of solitude) or

²⁴⁶ TDCJ explained that it is “rare that someone is removed from the program for this reason as the GRAD program attempts to accept inmates who are likely to instead discharge their sentences as opposed to being released early” (N.J., personal communication, April 3, 2012).

Phase III (the test continues in general population, but they have studied and prepared).

Table 5.8: GRAD Removals for Ramsey and Ellis Units, Fiscal Year 2010

	Fiscal Year 2010 (September 1, 2009 – August 31, 2010)		
Phase I Removals	Ramsey Unit	Ellis Unit	Total Removals by Phase
Disciplinary	2	3	5
Voluntary	4	2	6
Administrative	3	2	5
FI-R Vote	0	1	1
Release/Discharge	0	0	0
Phase I Total	9	8	17
Phase II Removals			
Disciplinary	29	31	60
Voluntary	6	3	9
Administrative	7	4	11
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	0	1	1
Phase II Total	42	39	81
Phase III Removals			
Disciplinary	9	10	19
Voluntary	2	3	5
Administrative	3	2	5
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	2	10	12
Phase III Total	16	25	41
Total Removals by Unit	67	72	139

Table 5.9: GRAD Removals for Ramsey and Ellis Units, Fiscal Year 2011

	Fiscal Year 2011 (September 1, 2010 – August 31, 2011)		
Phase I Removals	Ramsey Unit	Ellis Unit	Total Removals by Phase
Disciplinary	1	18	19
Voluntary	4	5	9
Administrative	6	0	6
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	0	0	0
Phase I Total	11	23	34
Phase II Removals			
Disciplinary	20	35	55
Voluntary	6	8	14
Administrative	9	3	12
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	3	4	7
Phase II Total	38	50	88
Phase III Removals			
Disciplinary	5	16	21
Voluntary	4	0	4
Administrative	2	2	4
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	2	6	8
Phase III Total	13	24	37
Total Removals by Unit	62	97	159

Table 5.10: GRAD Removals for Ramsey and Ellis Units, Partial Fiscal Year 2012

	Partial Fiscal Year 2012 (September 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012)		
Phase I Removals	Ramsey Unit	Ellis Unit	Total Removals by Phase
Disciplinary	2	8	10
Voluntary	0	2	2
Administrative	2	0	2
FI-R Vote	0	1	1
Release/Discharge	0	2	2
Phase I Total	4	13	17
Phase II Removals			
Disciplinary	11	16	27
Voluntary	4	1	5
Administrative	7	2	9
FI-R Vote	0	0	0
Release/Discharge	0	2	2
Phase II Total	22	21	43
Phase III Removals			
Disciplinary	5	3	8
Voluntary	0	0	0
Administrative	1	1	2
FI-R Vote	1	0	1
Release/Discharge	3	3	6
Phase III Total	10	7	17
Total Removals by Unit	36	41	77

Voluntary Removals

The decision to formally renounce is a voluntary one, and for some offenders, so is the decision to leave. Although “highly discourage[d]” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012), voluntary removal sends the offender back to Ad Seg for the duration of his sentence. Future participation in GRAD is an option but not a guarantee, as the offender must once again renounce, complete the two-year investigation, and “start all over again” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). “Termination” from the process, “either from day one through the successful graduation” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012), results in a trip back to segregation, almost as if the initial renunciation had never happened.

Reasons for voluntarily leaving the process are varied yet few, and all variations on a common theme: self-doubt about the inability to handle change. Teacher M.M. at the Ramsey Unit encourages and challenges her students by telling them “the strong survive...and if you’re not tough enough to conform to society, you’re not going to” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Strength and toughness are roundly tested when Phase II approaches, and a cellmate is the prize for renunciation. One Ramsey officer explained that some “can’t handle the population. They’re so mentally gone that they have to be single-celled. They can’t have people around them. Just can’t handle the pressure of being out with other offenders” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Overstimulation upon release from segregation – too many choices, too many bodies – unsettles the mind of one accustomed to the solitary life. Questioning their ability to live with another inmate in close quarters is

enough to send them packing their very few and approved belongings for the short trip back to solitary. Officer B.D. at the Ellis Unit reflected that

the ones that voluntarily give up the GRAD process, I see a lot more in Phase II, and I think a lot of it has to do with, "Man, I got down here, and now I'm living with a cellie. I just can't handle it." I've had some say that, "I've got a lot going on in my life right now and I just can't concentrate in my class." That's probably the majority of it. A lot of them, "Hey, I have family issues right now," or whatever, and, "I get in the classroom and I just let my family issues take over. I can't think about what they're teaching in there, and then I end up getting in trouble because I catch an attitude with somebody." So I think that's going to be a lot of it. Then a lot of it is just to be able to deal with being in Seg, and, "Now I'm over here with a cellie, and I'm having to get out there." We saw it a lot back when we first started, because you had a lot of that older generation that had been locked up 15, 20 years, and all of a sudden they've got to deal with some dude that don't want to clean up after himself or whatever, and they just get frustrated and, "You know what? Just send me back to Seg. I don't want to deal with this no more" (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Another officer affirmed Officer B.D.'s comments, explaining that some just cannot acclimate to the GRAD environment.

Some of them, what really gets them is when we move them to Phase II when they have to have a cellmate. They've been in cell Ad Seg totally by themselves, and then they go to Phase I by themselves. Now they have to occupy a cell with somebody else. That's it for them. "I can't deal with it. I've got to be housed with somebody else? I thought I could and I did it with the intention of going through with this whole thing so I can go to population, where I knew that was bound to happen. But I can't do it. This cell is too small for both of us. I can't do it" (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The number of removals during Phase II, as shown in Tables 5.8 through 5.10, supports these claims of the difficulty of transitioning from Phase I to II, even in the relatively controlled GRAD environment. For some, the price of acclimation

is too great and the required adaptation too taxing. For these offenders, GRAD often ends before it begins.

For others, fear of the unknown and self-doubt that they can handle the unexpected – or even complete the required written and oral lessons – converge into a voluntary removal. Admitting fear (and that admission is arguably a gangster's worst fear) to an officer as the reason to recuse oneself from GRAD is easier to do than conquering that same fear *in* GRAD. According to one Ellis officer,

Some of them just said that they were just scared. They've been locked up for a long time, at first. The first few of them had been locked up 20, 15 years. And they are just not ready to go to population. They never actually ever said the word "scared," but you know that's what it is. I know that's what it is. They're like, "Oh, I don't think I'm ready for this. It's just going too fast." They're scared. And I've had some that said, yeah, they're not ready for a cellie. A lot of them have just gotten used to being by themselves in a cell for 10, 15 years, 20 years....And some of them, they get here and they're like, "I didn't want to go through this. I thought I was going on a medical chain. So I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't want to be here." And some of them, when they find out how structured it is, and how rule-oriented it is, and how we actually enforce the rules, they were like, "Oh no. I'm not going to be able to do this." They don't want to, basically, follow the rules. They don't want a structured environment like that (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Another officer further explained that "the rules" often prove to be "too much" for the offenders, as some enter GRAD with the belief that "former" gang member status and a one-way ticket to population are awarded simply for showing up: "To me, they think they are just going to come sit in their cell for nine months, not get

in trouble for nine months, and then all of a sudden, ‘Okay, you made it’” (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

The “convenience” of being in segregation – from an ask-and-ye-shall-receive standpoint – and the realization that being in general population requires some self-imposed structure and initiative can influence the decision to withdraw from the process.²⁴⁷ Officer L.K. shared his opinion on the difference between segregation and population, and why an offender might backpedal and choose the familiarity of the single life:

Officer L.K.: Population sometimes can be a chore, trying to get from Point A to Point B. Let me put it like this. In Seg, everything is brought to you. *Everything*. You eat in Seg. They bring you your rec; you don’t even go to rec. They escort you to showers. You need to go to medical, guess what? They escort you. In population, it’s a little different. Fluctuates. You need to go to a medical appointment, and you have a ticket saying, “I need to go to this medical appointment,” but you have an officer that won’t let you out, or it’s count time, or you haven’t called it out. Whatever reason. Sometimes they’ll say, “You know what? It’s not worth it. I’ll just be escorted everywhere I’m going and have everything brought to me in Seg.” It’s much more convenient for them.

Interviewer (Author): Have you noticed any difference in those who think, “Yeah, let me just have everything brought to me”? Are they guys who have spent more time in Seg or less time in Seg?

Officer L.K.: Less. Less. It’s not even close. Eventually you get tired of that. You get tired of being in that same cell, walking in the same circle, and you want to get out, the older you get (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

²⁴⁷ One of the counselors considers the “free world” to be the prison world, as she explains to her students that “everybody gives them everything” in prison. The “real world [i.e., the world outside of prison],” she tells them, “is hard because then you are expected to start Maslowe’s Hierarchy [and] start providing your physical needs and working....You are not going to be handed all this stuff” (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

The catered “convenience” of segregation for those with fewer years in Ad Seg loses its appeal with each passing year.

Non-Voluntary Removals

Sometimes, however, when a GRAD inmate accepts the challenge of having and being a cellmate, it ends in aggression, followed by removal from the process, and a trip back to segregation. Officers noted “fights” as one reason for staff-initiated removals from GRAD. For some offenders, despite an attempt to “get along with their cellmate[,...] over time it just builds up” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Cellmate conflict resolution may involve staff advocating for an offender to “use your skills and try to work it out” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012); however, the staff protection default is in place: “If that doesn’t work, then we’ll try to intervene” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Asserting “probably about 95% [of offenders removed non-voluntarily]” are due to “major disciplinaries,” an Ellis officer added:

[T]hose disciplinaries vary from...anything from fighting to sexual misconduct....I had one removed today for being out of place. He was already in Phase III [in general population]. He got caught in another guy’s cell in population. And he got locked up, and he got a major case for being out of place. I’ve had some [who] used to work in the wood shop. They were using inhalants over there. He was a sprayer; he was spraying lacquer on the cabinets. And they have to wear gas masks. Inside of his gas mask he had a towel that was drenched in the paint thinner. He put it inside of his mask, and he’d be huffing it. He was just having a good old time. We removed him for that (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Other officers affirmed that the majority of offenders are removed for disciplinary infractions, such as sexual misconduct and fighting (those are “probably our two biggest ones[, although] for a while it was contraband cases”

[B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012]), behavior that does not involve gangs. One officer acknowledged, “We’re not kicking them out for gang-related reasons” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Another officer illustrated this point with a story about Phase III GRAD offenders boosting bread:

Officer B.D.: A lot of the cases that were going major were cases like stealing, like they were stealing food off the chow line, stuff like that. It cost the state money, so we’re going, “If you’re going to come down here and steal the food, then you’re going to go back to Seg.” [...] We feed them on the wing over here, so they send the chow down here, and they have a steam table set up. A lot of times they steal some bread off the line. They weren’t just [taking] like a slice; it was a whole loaf or two whole loaves of bread. Then we’d have to go do a shakedown and find a whole loaf or two loaves of bread in their cells from where they stole it off the chow cart. The reason we know is because the bread they sell in the commissary is different from the bread that they have in the chow hall, so you can tell the difference...

Interviewer (Author): Stealing bread, though, is not necessarily gang-related. It’s not reverting to the gang behavior.

Officer B.D.: Yeah, not necessarily gang behavior, and that’s not necessarily why they get kicked out [i.e., for gang-related activity]. It’s more of, “You’re not going to do what you need to do to become a productive inmate out there, and you’re still reverting back to your old ways, whether it be stealing, whatever you’re doing.” This whole process is about change, and if you’re not going to come in here and be willing to change, then we’re not willing to let you back out in population (personal communication, January 10, 2012).²⁴⁸

Suppressing the gang culture may be a more attainable goal within the GRAD bubble, but removing the trappings of the broader prison community may be

²⁴⁸ Although unsubstantiated, one possible reason for stealing the bread was to use it, along with fruit, sugar and other readily-available ingredients, to brew prison-made alcoholic beverages, such as “hooch” or “pruno.”

more elusive. And if one of the goals is to create “better convicts,” then the bread bandits might need a remedial course or hope for a second chance to successfully complete the process.²⁴⁹

Some offenders subject themselves to a hybrid removal, one that is non-voluntarily voluntary and borders on self-sabotage. A teacher recounts the guaranteed student-loss-per-phase and how fear continues to guide their behavior:

Teacher J.E.: You typically lose a GRAD student the first three weeks [in Phase I]....You always lose a GRAD student in the last three weeks of Phase II. And you’ll lose a GRAD student in Phase III. Those three you can count. I have never started with a number and ended with the same number.

Interviewer (Author): Are they usually voluntarily removing themselves?

Teacher J.E.: No. They’ll do things like getting caught up in contraband, stealing bread....I had one before he left Phase III, I said, “You’re going to have a wreck if you’re not careful.” He was wearing somebody else’s watch that he contrabanded. Writing love notes to the female officers, proposing marriage to them. Crazy stuff, man. Hot-wiring the radios. Or get[ting] a new tattoo. That’s an automatic dismissal. I mean, stuff that you and I couldn’t logically figure out how somebody can do something so damn stupid....I do think some of it is [self-sabotage]. *They’re scared of success.* They will tell you when they complete the program, “This is the first thing I have ever completed positive.” That’s pretty amazing when you’re talking to a 40-year-old (personal communication, January 11,

²⁴⁹ According to respondents, a non-voluntary removal from GRAD for disciplinary – and not gang-related – reasons is not the end of the line; they can be “recycled and given another chance” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012). They can still be redeemed through GRAD, even with the disciplinary infraction; however, they must first complete their disciplinary sentence. Once they again meet the GRAD criteria (for example, display no assaultive behavior toward other inmates and correctional staff for at least two years; exhibit no sexually aggressive behavior for at least two years; receive no major disciplinary actions for at least one year; etc.), they are eligible to begin the nine-month process again.

2012).

The fear of returning to general population triggers this intentional “malfunction,” as teacher J.E. elaborates that many are “so far removed from society, [and] to them, population is society,” he expects at least one or two inmates to leave immediately before Phase III begins. But for those who “go out there and make it, [they] love it. It’s like they put their toes in the grass in sunshine.”

THE CULTURE OF GRAD: CHANGE HAPPENS OVER TIME

For those willing to accept what GRAD offers, they may find themselves changing their attitudes, behavior, and interactions with peers and staff. The culture in GRAD is framed by the relationship between the security staff and the instructors, as they set the tone, role model the behavior, and create the conditions that encourage resocialization.

Visible Changes in Appearance

For the offenders at the Ramsey Unit, the transformation begins in the GRAD captain’s office with the formal intake and quick introduction to the rules of the unit by the prison unit major. Having just arrived from segregation to begin Phase I, the offenders line up outside the office and await their turn, each appearing, in the words of one counselor, as an “animal that’s cowed” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). As a quiet participant-observer, I sat in a chair pressed against the wall in the office shared by two higher-ranking officers – big enough for two desks and a small path to a staff bathroom. One of the desks sat atop wooden cubes; apparently the state does not provide desks big enough for taller employees. The major (for the entire facility, not specifically

assigned to GRAD) was seated at the desk, as a female administrative employee began the intake process. Calling in the offenders individually, she greeted them with a perfunctory explanation – “You’re here for GRAD” – and provided them with the necessary paperwork for their signatures. Additional routine questions followed, and then the offenders were provided with a brief explanation about the expectation to “treat everyone here with respect,” and respond with “yes, sir, no, sir, yes, ma’am, no, ma’am” whether they’re in officer clothes or free-world clothes.” Then they were briefed on the number and types of disciplinary cases that might return them to segregation. “Understood?” Yes, sir. “Any general questions?” No, sir. After being informed that a future, longer GRAD orientation would be provided, the offender was handed a small packet of information and ushered out of the office, as another offender was called in. After an untold number of years spent in isolation, many appeared more than meek to the casual observer, almost as if they were trying to disappear into themselves. If an outsider were looking at them at this very moment and in their current physical state, he or she might wonder how they ever intimidated anyone in the free world. And so begins the resocialization process.

The visible outer layer – the offender’s physical appearance – is the first to be shed upon admission to the GRAD wing. One teacher characterizes the offenders as being “shell shocked when they walk in,” adding, “They look like they’ve been hit in the head with a tuning fork. They’re wide-eyed and bug-eyed and scared to death” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). Another counselor at the Ellis Unit applied the metaphor of the “cowed animal” to describe the offenders’ demeanor when they first get to GRAD:

You've got a human being who is cowed...who's scared of everything....[For example,] a cowed dog is a dog that's got his tail between his legs; you've got somebody that's scared. We call them, in my world, the cowed. And in the horse trade, you get spooky horses....You've got spooky people. They're so spooky, you've got to keep them by themselves. Anything spooks them. So even with horses, the horses are that way when they're young. So what you have to do is desensitize them. So, what you do is you start making noise around them, and you start doing things around them, and you keep doing this til they settle down. And then they get used to it, and you can come up, and you can touch them, you can have birds fly over or anything else. But, in the beginning, the horses can't do that. They're scared of everything. Well, you've got people that are exactly the same way. So you've got to start getting them used to you. So you've got to desensitize them, and you do that by letting them start interacting with other people as much as you can (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

During the course of the process, especially in the transition from Phase I to Phase II, GRAD staff observe physical changes in the offenders' appearances that complement the changes in behavior and attitude. Counselor L.C. and Officer B.D. both commented on the renewed interest in their physical appearance, with a tendency to "start working out" once they advance to Phase II (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012), or wanting to "keep their jumpers pressed or keep their head shaved real good" (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Another teacher described the physical transformation as nothing short of "amaz[ing]":

I wish that we could do this, and several people have said this, I think that you would be amazed to see, if we could take a photograph of the first day that they arrive here and the photograph that they have when they graduate, it's remarkable, because that first photograph is going to show this tough guy with his chin up. The second photograph is going to show a person that has either lost weight that needed to, or gained weight because they needed to, they have a relaxed look on their face, and you

can see that they're more truly confident in their appearance than what it was from the very beginning (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer B.D. reaffirmed this sentiment, noting that the typical GRAD offenders change "the way they carry themselves, going from a mad dog into the happy-go-lucky type person" (personal communication, January 10, 2012). They can appreciate a bit of levity and can finally take a deep breath: "They're not Mr. Atlas walking around with the world on their shoulder. Now they are able to hop, skip, and jump" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012). Teacher J.T. summed up the physical transformation as a Houdini act:

I had this one guy that really had this mean look, and he finished the program and everything, and people were asking, "Where'd he go? Where was he sent to?" I said, "He's still here." They couldn't believe it because he had changed his look so much. It is a powerful process (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The months' worth of classes chisels away at their "hard" exterior and, according to Officer H.G., leaves them

look[ing] just like an average person. They got friendly. [Laughs] They got friendly on you. I always tell them on their graduation how when they come out [to GRAD], they all got that mask on, but now they all look friendlier than a box of puppies. [Laughs] (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Take Off Your Mask and Let Yourself Breathe: The Shedding Begins in Earnest (Preparation for Personal Transformation)

From Ad Seg to GRAD Phase I

Accompanying the changes in physical appearance are those in behavior and attitude, as the offenders acclimate to life on the GRAD wing. The

preparation for personal transformation begins on Day One when expectations are set. Although still technically classified as “close custody” and Ad Seg offenders, they first begin to shed the vestiges of their former segregated lives, a process that continues throughout the phases. The physical trappings of segregation, such as being handcuffed any time the offender is out of his cell, and the lack of privileges, such as access to television, are slowly cast aside to engender change. As Officer M.R. at the Ramsey Unit explains,

[B]ecause just like they came from high security, everywhere they went they were handcuffed. Now I tell them, “I’m not even going to handcuff you anymore.” For many it’s like you flick a switch on them. “Gosh, I don’t have handcuffs on.” I tell them, “When’s the last time you watched TV?” “You know, I haven’t watched TV in 10 years.” “I haven’t watched TV in five 10, 15, 20 years.” “Tonight you’re going to watch TV in your own cell, by yourself” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer J.S. summarizes staff’s goals and expectations: “When they first get here, they’ve still got that Seg mentality where they’re yelling at their neighbor and putting the mirrors through the bars, which we tell them, ‘This is not Seg. You’re not going to be treated like Seg, so don’t act like Seg’” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer B.D., however, described the mixed message in what the offenders are told about their new “non-seg” status and how they are actually treated:

We have these offenders coming through GRAD, and they say, “You’re no longer a Seg inmate; you’re a GRAD inmate.” Well, if you bring them in here and they say, “I’m a GRAD inmate,” and you come in here and you treat them like Seg, it’s kinda hard to start changing their mentality because they’re still being treated like segregation inmates. You know, you’re still having to get cuffed everywhere you go... (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Modifying the process in Phase I by transitioning the transition might better serve the offender in shifting his self-perception from a segregated to future population inmate. Officer B.D. supported the “double recreation” change the unit implemented during the last six weeks of Phase I so each offender could slowly acclimate to being “around somebody else,” adding, “it’s just one other person, but that one other person’s a lot” (personal communication, January 10, 2012). (Prior to this change, Phase I offenders had individual recreation for the duration of Phase I.) He advocates for providing “a little bit of freedom” within the early phases, explaining that

You kinda give them just a little bit of freedom just to kinda let them say, “Okay, I’m not a Seg inmate no more.” Their mentality starts to change. If you still treat them like Seg, then you still have that Seg mentality a lot of times. So, a lot of times, on Phase I you still have to go down there and kinda almost deal with them like a Seg inmate because they still have that mentality. And it’s kinda hard to tell them, “Hey, don’t act like a Seg inmate but, yeah, we’re going to treat you like one” (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Other offenders continue to wear their “Ad Seg mentality” like a symbolic, protective “mask.” According to Officer H.G. at the Ellis Unit,

When they first get out of Seg, they have...[what] we call...a mask. They got that penitentiary mask on. All hard, want to act tough. Because when they’re first coming out, they’re probably scared, too. They’re coming out of Seg, and they haven’t been around anyone, any other offenders without handcuffs in a long time. We group them up in groups of 20. So they’re coming out looking hard. They’ve got this hard look on them. They “yes, sir, no, sir” you because we told them they had to and everything (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Officer M.R. at the Ramsey Unit validates Officer H.G.'s characterization, stressing to his offenders that their participation in GRAD requires the removal of their "mask" to embrace the potential for change:

I always tell them from day one, I tell them, "Why are you here?" "Well, I'm here to get out of Seg." That's the main one, "I'm here to get out of Seg. I don't want to be a gang member anymore." And I tell them, "Those are by-products. Yes, if you complete – *if, if* is a big word – if you complete, you will get out of Seg. But you are here to change who you are. You're here to change. You're here to change who you were in Seg as opposed to who you will be, hopefully, nine months from now." In Seg, as in any correctional setting, particularly Seg, high security, where most of these guys come from, you have to put up with certain attitudes like the, "I don't give a crap attitude," "I'm the toughest guy on the block," "I don't take no crap from nobody." You have to hold that attitude every day, 24 hours a day. I tell them, "You need to take that Ad Seg mask off of you." Actually, I don't even tell them, "Take the Ad Seg..." I say, "You need to take the mask off." And 99% of them know exactly what I'm talking about, because they know it's like, "I don't have to carry that tough guy." A lot of them, they know exactly what I mean because they understand at some point, some way or another, they know it is this costume I have to put on every day and say to show I'm not going to be pushed around, that I'm tough, that I'm this, that I'm that. Coming here, take the mask off. You're here to change. Hopefully nine months from now when you walk – we call it "walk the stage" – when you graduate, you'll reflect on how much of a change you've done as opposed to from that point to when you first got here and got off the bus. You're here to change (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

But removing the mask is not easy for everyone. Some offenders admit that the freedom is profoundly intense, and they waver on a retreat back to the familiarity of segregation:

I've had some say, "This is too much. The free movement, even the cuffs that I don't have anymore, it's too much. I want it closed, confined. I want noise, shouting, and screaming." It's hard for them to break that mold that they saw, that they dealt with every day. Everyone's different. So for some, it's hard (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Being treated as a non-segregated offender in a gradually less restrictive environment can be sensory and privilege overload for some – too many choices where none existed before. It is being thrust into a department store when all one has known is a five-and-dime. (One counselor illustrated the point with a tale about a GRAD completer who made parole. The offender's family contacted the counselor and asked for "suggestions" on continuing the transition from prison to free world during their first post-prison restaurant experience. His response:

I said, "Well, be careful where you take them out to eat. Don't take them to a buffet for at least two months because the decisions will be too overwhelming for them. Ask them what kind of food they want to eat and take them there and order for them." They'll eat it. You know, they'll just do what they're told. But you've got to kind of introduce them to it. It's like, don't send them to the grocery store for some cereal. We laugh about it, but to them, they aren't used to making decisions. They don't have choices here. We take all their choices away from them. So, that's a problem [F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012].)

While some instructors will stop by the wing in Phase I and engage the offenders in conversation through the bars (beyond passing out their assignments), counselor F.W. refuses. He understands that at this stage of the process, the offenders "don't do people," are "a lot more humble," and exist under a "false sense of security" because they remain single-celled: "They've got a big mouth. They're smarter than everybody else. But they've also got some bars that are going to keep anybody from coming in and changing their mind." He offers a more philosophical reason for his lack of sustained interaction during

this phase: “I answer the questions that they want, but I’ll never see them again. I won’t see *that* person again. When they come to Phase II, I don’t see that person, so why should I bother fooling with somebody I’m not going to see” (personal communication, January 10, 2012)?

From Phase I to Phase II and Beyond

As each offender removes his mask and transfers to Phase II, sizing up his new cellmate and meeting the rest of his group mates, he continues the internal and external transformation. One correctional officer commented on the more obvious change in appearance upon advance to Phase II – exchanging the one-piece, white “jumper” for two articles of clothing.

As a matter of fact, when I took them to showers earlier, one of them said, “I forgot what two pieces of clothes looked like.” He goes, “I didn’t even know what size I was,” because he’s been wearing jumpers for so long. In Phase I they have to wear jumpers, but when they go to Phase II and Phase III, they get to wear regular clothing....Top and bottom....Pants and a shirt (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

But the changes during Phase II are more profound than fashion. Their first appearance in the classroom, according to one teacher, is fraught with good intentions and enthusiasm, despite the fact that they “lack a lot of human characteristics..., a lot of human traits, [and] the ability to share with people” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). They still project a “tougher” exterior, even though they are “scared to death, but they don’t let anybody know it” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). As they begin to feel more comfortable being in the presence of other people – “after maybe a week,

maybe a little bit longer, maybe two weeks” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012) – they begin “testing [the staff] to see what they can get and what they can’t” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). The honeymoon is ending.

Unbeknownst to the offenders, a new identity outside of “prison gang member” is already being forged, courtesy of the teachers and counselors. When the inmates walk through the classroom door, they are viewed as “students” first and not as gang members or prisoners. Teacher J.E. tells them on that first day, “You start with a clean slate with me, and there’s no preconceived notions” (personal communication, January 11, 2012), and teacher M.M. states simply, “I can see them as needing rehab regardless of why they’re here” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Counselors F.W. and C.G., while privy to information about the offenders’ histories (by virtue of being TDCJ employees, counselors have access to the agency’s mainframe computer system, whereas the teachers employed by the Windham School District do not), do “not pay much attention to it” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). Counselor C.G. explained that he does not want an inmate’s criminal history to “sway” him, so he tries

to treat them like they’re a person, which is what they are. And try to treat them and get them to be what I know they can be, if that makes sense. For instance, if I know your specific crime, I might have prejudices or biases about that, and [that] would tend to subconsciously, at least, impact my ability to do my job. So I try not to be aware of that. I just know that they’re not here for singing too loudly in choir. I know that they’re

dangerous (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Counselor F.W. affirms his fellow counselor's perspective, commenting that "they're just another human being to me. It's not really healthy for me to try to label them. They're humans. Human beings can't be labeled..." (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Although individual preference dictates which instructor receives or seeks out the information about his or her "students," counselor L.C. is "okay with [knowing their criminal histories]," indicating that "it's better that we know so we know [the] discrepancies between what they say and who they say they are" (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Former President Ronald Reagan's words resonate, especially in the prison setting: "Trust but verify."²⁵⁰

Rank as Obstacle: Charisma and a Head Nod (Not All GRAD Students Are Created Equal)

Walking into a GRAD classroom does not mean walking in with a clean slate. It might be easier to shake off the "gang member" label for the duration of the process than it is to shake off one's former rank. Officers have observed the

²⁵⁰ Instructors do receive information on the offenders' former gang associations. Counselor C.G. concedes that "that specifically I probably do need to know, at least in my mind I do. Because if I see them still participating, like they just clique-up in the classroom and just hang out with [Texas Syndicate] with [Texas Syndicate], and [Aryan Brotherhood of Texas] with [Aryan Brotherhood of Texas], and [Aryan Circle] with [Aryan Circle], I call them on it. I say, 'You know what, to the casual observer, it still looks like you're in a gang. Maybe you ought to expand your horizons and associate with people other than [former members from your former gang]..." (personal communication, January 11, 2012). Even if instructors are not given this information, there are other ways to figure out former associations: "Their tattoos tell you. So it's not like it's a secret because it's printed all over them" (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

manner in which these offenders carry themselves throughout the process and how other offenders respond to them. Officer L.K. detects that “difference” between a high-ranking offender and a soldier, explaining, “You know when someone has stature[...] when someone walks in the room...and they have a presence about them, you notice that” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Officer J.S. concurred, stating, “You can tell by the way they act in class if they’re outspoken or if they’re quiet. You can pretty much tell who holds what rank. The more quiet ones, they’re the more higher-ranked than the ones that are loud and obnoxious” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). Officer L.K. qualified their propensity for silence by adding, “They have a strong personality...and you’ll never have any problems [in class] out of them. You will never have one single problem. And that’s kind of scary. It shouldn’t be, but it’s almost like some of them were going through the motions” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer M.R. at the Ramsey Unit also addressed the behavioral and personality differences between the leaders and the followers in the GRAD setting:

Every once in a while we get one who held a lot of weight in this particular STG, and he comes in here and supposedly that’s thrown out the window. But you can still tell they have that charisma, they have that hold on whoever they come in contact with. Though it’s not supposed to be happening, you can tell their words mean more than some random person who’s talking. They still maintain that, “Just because we’re in GRAD, you’re not the general no more.” You just watch what you say. I think they carry that with them through the whole process. [The other

offenders]...all know who everybody is. If I was a high-ranking member with the Texas Syndicate and finally renounce and come here, although I do not hold that rank...I held for the Texas Syndicate, people will still know who I am. And when I come in here, and I know who the high-ranking member of the Mexican Mafia was, we can probably give an acknowledgement and just go from there. I'm certainly not going to have the underlings that were one time *my* underlings just talk to me any way. I think I will still hold that bit of respect that was due to me before I renounced, I would still hold that respect with them. Although it's not supposed to happen on the surface, underneath it still exists (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The difference between soldiers and leaders manifests itself in the way former leaders handle themselves in the classroom. They still command respect and expect it to be given, even from the instructors – who often have to remind the offenders that the classroom is the territory of the educator.

I'd say if I was going to find a difference, the difference would be in the ones that were the leaders and the ones that were the followers, regardless of whether they're Hispanic or White. The leaders, to me, they're still, "Whatever they say goes." And they've been locked up for years. And it's like, "Okay, you're in a classroom and the teacher kinda rules the classroom, whether you realize it or not." And I have had to have conversations with these guys that they were not the top dog. You know, "This is my classroom. You don't decide what we talk about." When I cut them off and said, "That's not what the class is about. You need to discuss that on the wing if you want to," then they are offended because I cut them off. It's like, "Well, you're not the top dog." I told one guy, "You are not the top dog in here. Have you figured that out?" [Laughs] That's just the way it is. I say, "This is *my* class." I said, "This is my job. You don't come in here and tell me what we're going to do" (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Leaders may have renounced their gang membership but have yet to relinquish the attitude and demeanor that helped them rise to the top.

Group Transformation 101: From Gang to Group, From / to We and Back

Group Formation

As Clemmer noted in *The Prison Community* (1940), in times of crisis, GRAD offenders cast aside the impersonality and singularity (that is, they before existed as solitary figures just doing their time) and band together to wade through the hours of classes that will lead them to the holy grail of general population. One of the Ellis teachers outlined the group formation process that transforms the “shell shocked” into the relaxed:

In that initial group dynamic, first stage of forming...I call it the warm, fuzzy stage. I have a really good first two weeks in every class; everybody loves everybody. Then you have a shift where people start getting on each other's nerves. And somehow, toward the end, it comes back together (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

An officer elaborated that during this initial honeymoon phase, “they're all gung ho[, and believing,] ‘Yeah, it's going to be a good program.’ [But] then it wears off on them and they start acting up a little bit” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

GRAD offenders use the influence of this new “primary prison group” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 115) to foster a “we-feeling” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 115) during the process (especially in Phase II when the group work begins in earnest). Already inclined to join groups – they were in gangs, after all – the inmates become a unified group, all with the same purpose and goals: to learn effective ways to deal with life and relationships, inside and outside the prison walls, and

to make the most of their second chance. Teacher J.T. explains that the offenders “monitor themselves for control,” and uses a blemish on the classroom wall to illustrate this:

The [class] discussions can get very heated. I have a little piece of paper covered on one of the walls by the chalkboard where the sheetrock was cracked by a heated discussion. However, the group comes together most of the time to try to curb anything like that because they have so much to lose....And they know they have too much at stake and they remind each other, “Hey, we can’t go there because we know what this is going to do” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer M.R. further underscored the “we-feeling” (Clemmer, 1940, p. 115) as a bonding experience for the offenders to “develop this sense of team,” as they “push each other along and motivate each other” (personal communication, January 5, 2012) to complete the nine months successfully. Teacher J.T. concurs:

What I really see is a shift from us, a team...But see, they came out of a gang, and they put them in a GRAD program, and they said, “You’re no longer gang members, but we’re going to put you in a class. You’re going to be *team members*.” Then, the first eight or ten weeks they’re team members (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

This random group of mismatched former rival gang members has coalesced into a team and, according to some respondents, even a family. Officer B.D. clarified:

It’s kind of weird to say, but it’s almost like it’s its own separate little gang because it becomes a family a lot of times. If I walk out of the population and go to the rec yard out there, you still tend to see a lot of the same guys that were in group together playing basketball together, doing the same thing, even while they’re out there in population. They don’t have to [stay together in population]. Once they leave out of Phase II and go to Phase III, it’s open to do what you want to do and interact with who you want to interact with. So you can see a family bond between them. I

guess just because they spent four-and-a-half months [together]. Like I said, when they get in this class they hear a lot of personal details about each other because they bring out a lot. When these teachers teach and the counselors teach, they'll start bringing back stuff out of your childhood. You're sitting there letting some guy that you probably don't know too much about listen to all your problems, then you tend to kind of bond with each other because now this guy knows a lot of your past history, so it just becomes almost like a family-type friendship out of it. Because they get to know each other personally, not just what they've heard or what they've seen in the penitentiary; they're starting to know why this person was acting the way he was acting or why this person did what he did, because they pulled a lot of that out of them inside the classroom (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

The image of "family" rears itself again during the completion ceremonies, where the offenders provide their testimonials and often single out fellow group mates whom they now call "brother" (and not all represent the same race or former gang). It is a fine line between the positive and negative connotations when using the word "family" to describe this new group of offenders; for the gangster, "family," or *fama*, can be a nod to the old school Hispanic prison gangs. One of the teachers acknowledges this, but uses the term anyway, as it has a different meaning in the context of GRAD:

The day that they graduate, you're supposed to go up on stage, give your speech, come down, sit down. Before they sat down, they hugged about three of their group members because they became – and I hate to use the word "family" because gang people use "family" – but they became like brothers, and it was a true, sincere friendship of wanting to see each other succeed and to go back there into the free world and be for their families and do the right thing. For me, that's really something that, in that length of time, they've gone from bitter enemies to being a solid support for each other in the right way (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Further illustrating this point, after providing a testimonial before family and TDCJ staff during a completion ceremony at the Ramsey Unit in January 2012, an older White offender ambled back to his chair and, after he sat down, a young Hispanic offender from his GRAD class draped his arm over his peer's shoulder, as if to say, "Good job. We did it." Over a course of months, they have become a family, albeit with an expiration date, as many will be sent to different units upon graduation.

The group formation process is the same, whether it occurs in the free world among individuals looking to belong, in prison among offenders seeking protection, or in a controlled environment like GRAD. Counselor L.C. encapsulates this point: "It's not they're becoming gangs or anything. They become a group. There's a difference between a gang and a group" (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Group Formation in Reverse: The Return to I

Each GRAD group begins with an individual offender (who is first single-celled in Phase I) who is mandated to be a part of a group during Phase II, and is then released into population, again as an individual offender. The "I" slowly became "We" and a group was born, but then reverts back to "I" to prepare for the return to general population where each offender again will have to fend for himself, only this time armed with the necessary tools to increase the odds of success. As teacher J.E. continues in his group formation overview,

Then somewhere along the line they figure out, “I’m doing this for me, not for you.” And they’ll tell each other, “No hard feelings, but I ain’t going to see you after this. I don’t really care what happens to you.” And that’s a true statement. So there’s a shift in the group from us to me. That’s a big deal. When they figure that out, they just wade on through it (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Mr. A.P. in the STGMO expands on this theme and summarizes GRAD’s role in this reversal: “That’s what GRAD essentially has done, is taking a person and helping them as an individual to make the individual decisions and not the group decisions. So, as an STG member he is no longer an active STG member. He is going to make his decisions based upon himself [and his needs]” (personal communication, January 4, 2012). They are dependent upon the group to get back to the self.

HOW MUCH IS THAT DOGGY IN THE CELL WINDOW: FROM MAD DOG TO FRIENDLIER THAN A BOX OF PUPPIES

Personal Transformation

The offenders’ individual personal transformations are highlighted by their achievements in the group setting. Many of the offenders, according to the instructors, experience “light bulb” moments where they suddenly “start becoming aware” (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012) and realize the underlying reasons for their past behavior. Counselor L.C. shares the “guilt, shame and remorse” the offenders tap into, as they imagine how they could have “done something different” in the past: “You just start seeing lights coming on. And you see them becoming more pliable and...more flexible. And you see them

going from tunnel-vision to at least having a broader, panoramic vision” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Teacher M.M. recalls a similar experience with an offender who was analyzing newspaper articles about Mexican drug cartel activity for a class assignment. While completing a “thinking report,” the offender had an epiphany:

He said, “You know what? Everything I did as a kid was because I needed to belong.” The little light bulb came on. And it’s like, “Oh, my gosh, that’s all I was trying to do was to be accepted.” And he was a little geeky. He was smart and probably a little different than some of the kids. It dawned on him, “I was just trying to belong” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Changes in Attitude and Behavior

The changes in attitude and behavior are cultivated by the GRAD culture. The offenders learn to trust and delay gratification; they want to be in general population *yesterday*, but have to learn to take it slowly. One offender repeatedly stated he was “getting nothing out of this,” but Officer B.D. convinced him to “hold on,” explaining that when he advanced to Phase II, the freedom of limited movement and the classes would be well worth the wait. The verdict? “Now today he’s thanking me [for talking him into staying]” (personal communication, January 10, 2012). Another officer explained how GRAD offenders are “less likely to [become violent] now” when their “buttons are pushed”:

When dealing with correctional staff, and let’s say that staff is wrong; there’s no way around it, they’re wrong. The inmate will try another avenue. He will try to go to a supervisor. He will try to go to staff. He’ll try to go to his peers instead of just becoming violent. He will try to put a little more [belief]

into the system that this will work. "I'm right. I didn't do anything wrong." So I have noticed that (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

When asked why the offender might "put a little more belief into the system" now as a GRAD inmate and not when he was in Ad Seg, the officer paused before replying: "Before they weren't trying to do the right thing. Now they're trying to do the right thing, so they figure maybe people see that."

The offenders also appear more driven, as they now have places to be and things to do outside of their concrete box. According to one Ramsey officer, they begin to "live with purpose" and care for others besides themselves:

At some point, I think it's when they come in contact with our teachers here, like Miss J.T. Miss J.T.'s awesome because she really just dives in to her students and gets them immersed in whatever they're doing. You can see that they finally actually care about something. They actually care about not disappointing Miss J.T., for example. "I don't want to disappoint her, and I'm going to work hard, or I'm going to do this, or I'm going to do my project." They're actually living with purpose, so to speak. I can see that in some of them where they didn't have it before, whereas the ones that said, "I know everything. I know everything there is," and you kind of see that same person...They're being more participating in the process, in the classes and stuff like that (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The threat of disappointing a teacher or counselor who has devoted his or her time to their second chance gives them renewed hope. Their self-admission that "somebody cares about them" is not to be taken lightly, as counselor F.W. states that with this knowledge, "they become relatively loyal to you. You become more than a teacher or anything else. You're the gospel" (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

The offenders also learn that they and their opinions matter. Labeling GRAD offenders as “more thankful and more motivated when given the opportunity,” teacher J.E. teaches respect and models behavior, humanizing the offenders in the process by simply asking for their opinions:

One of the first days you do the journal, the very first day, you ask him for his opinion. Nobody’s asked for his opinion in 20 years, and you say, “I don’t know what you’ve got to say, and I don’t even care if I agree with you. I just want to hear what you’ve got to say. Take a side. Don’t sit on the fence. Either you’re for it or against it. Pick a side.” So I think it has to do with people skills – how you handle people and you’re modeling that to them. And it’s okay if I don’t like you. It’s okay if I don’t agree with you, but I’m going to shut up and listen to you. That’s, I think, just part of my job to teach them that (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

For some offenders, GRAD provides their first opportunities to experience any degree of success, whether it is the bashful student acting in a role play before his classmates, or the school dropout whose assignments are exemplary. One of the teachers noted that “once they start experiencing this positive experience – that there is positive here, it’s not all negative – they want more and more and more” (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012). They eventually become comfortable with success and learn to accept the accompanying praise. In the Ad Seg world, the offenders understood that any attention was perceived as positive attention, according to an Ellis counselor:

When they’re over there [in Ad Seg], they have no way of getting positive attention. The only thing they can get is bad or worse. So, it’s better to cut myself and at least go see medical and see someone than sit here and stare at these bars all day. And it’s better having you [i.e., correctional officers] yelling at me than ignoring me. So, with these guys, I think the difference is they now have a channel where they can get positive

reinforcement, where they can get positive attention, right? And they end up looking for the attention that way than the way they used to look for it by chunking shit on people, right? “At least I got the attention. Otherwise, you just ignore me” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

With the preemptive attention in GRAD – security staff treating them like non-segregated inmates, the counselors’ presence in front of their cells in Phase I, and subsequent congratulatory baby steps in Phase II – the offenders acclimate to the world of praise, a world as foreign as general population after 20-plus years in segregation.

They have no trade, never even got the GED, no accomplishments. No one’s ever really patted them on the back. So, you see a big difference. Some of them seem to be uncomfortable when you praise them. But, after a while, it’s almost like, “Oh, all right.” They look forward to you saying, “Hey, good job. Way to go. You’re doing good. You got it. You understand it.” So, you see that change to where...their behavior is actually goal-oriented, but it’s goal-oriented in the positive to where they’re looking for the doggy biscuits. They’re willing to do the trick or whatever to get the treat. And they’re no different than anyone else. We all like to be praised (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

The Accidental Mentors: Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks and Having Them Teach the Box of Puppies

Within the GRAD environment, these first-time recipients of praise continue to practice what they have been taught and do the unthinkable in prison: help one another without fear of reprisal or being considered weak. For those offenders functioning at a lower level cognitively who cannot grasp the material as quickly as their peers, the instructors “use that to [their] advantage” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012). According to teacher J.E.,

I've got one [offender] in my morning class, and he probably functions at about a seventh grade level. And he claims to have learned to read by himself in prison, and I believe it. I always take the strongest student and try to pair him with them, and they learn that human quality of helping each other. And they really like that. They learn to develop....As a matter of fact, my lesson this morning was on empathy and sympathy. That's not in the curriculum, but it was in my vocabulary and that's what we covered today (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Learning to help, with encouragement and gentle coercion from the teacher, gives the offenders a new role and identity. Counselor C.G. also observed this GRAD reality of offender-helping-offender so everyone can succeed:

The thing is you can take anyone at any level they're at and teach them anything you want to teach them. You just have to reinforce it, be repetitive, listen to their questions, and get the feedback from them [that] they totally understand it. And these guys, maybe it's the nature of the beast, but these guys are real big about helping each other make it. So, I'll have them actually helping the other guy to understand (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Offenders also assist their fellow classmates whose disabilities render GRAD that much more difficult to navigate. Officer J.S. attested to the group's newfound "we-feeling" (Clemmer, 1940, p. 115) by their resolve to move the entire group along: "We have some handicapped offenders going through the process. They help them out. They can be two rival gangs, but they're still helping them out. So that's interesting in one aspect because six months ago, these two were enemies, [and] now they're helping each other out" (personal communication, January 5, 2012). During the process, "they start caring about each other," according to teacher J.T., who shared a story about some of her GRAD students who supported a fellow peer:

I just finished a class a couple of weeks ago with a man that was blind. He had the top average in class because he processed this all in his mind. And the guys rallied around him and got him from Point A to Point B, and they would read to him what the journal entry was, and they would write it down for him. So they do help each other. He was a little embarrassed when I gave them their assignment in the class with all the other students: "You're going to write his journal this day, you do it the next day." He was a little embarrassed. But for the first time in their life, they gave something of their time to help somebody, and they thought that was pretty neat to be able to give something back for the first time (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

When asked if assisting a fellow offender with a disability was an act of kindness seen with general population offenders, Officer J.S. stressed it was not, adding, "Out in population, it's pretty much every man for himself" (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

For some offenders, their mentoring skills evolve during Phase II, as one counselor noted:

Older offenders seem to have a positive impact on the younger ones. They were kind of pulling them along, kind of like, "I've been there, done that, got a T-shirt a hundred times. Let me tell you, maybe you ought to be listening, all right, 'cause I've been there and done that. And you're going to end up like me, here for the seventh time. I just wish I'd heard and listened to this before" (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

The simple act of helping one another through the process "surprises" not only the offenders, but also the staff. One correctional officer at the Ramsey Unit remarked that those invested in the process will encourage others in their GRAD group to join them in the quest to change:

I've seen where one person helps another, and together they make it through. Sometimes they need support of their friends, their cellie, their

cellmates, and they make it through. I've seen some where, when they first stepped off the bus, I would've said, "Boy, there is no way." Then it surprises me, you know? I see throughout the nine months [and] I say, "Wow" (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

The offenders continue their mentoring ways when they address new GRAD recruits to set expectations and offer words of wisdom to alleviate some of the anxiety. Offenders who have

already graduated [will] speak to them a little about the process to come and to let them know someone was in their shoes when they first started. The ones that have graduated have expressed, "I know we have structure, but it's a freedom." They express, "You'll never have that freedom in Seg," and they express their appreciation for that freedom now. "If I want to go to church, I don't have to just grab my bible and read it in my cell. I can actually go to church. If I want to go to recreation, I don't have to wait for that officer to announce recreation and just go for one hour in this steel cage. I can actually go with my peers and enjoy recreation with whoever I want to." There's a real appreciation for doing that (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, during completion ceremonies, the graduating students often address the Phases II and III offenders who are seated across from the stage as witnesses to a transformation. At the Ellis Unit in January 2012, one graduate acknowledged that he and his group would be fully "tested" upon complete immersion in general population post-GRAD. Another, speaking directly to the Phase II offenders who were seated in the back of the chapel, said simply, "Get ready to be humbled." Somewhere along the way, they became accidental mentors, fostering empathy instead of antipathy, helping instead of hurting, and sharing instead of shooting.

What do the GRAD offenders do with their Boy Scout fortitude to go forth and help? Understanding that “you can’t take somebody away from a gang membership without offering them something else” (Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons, 2006, “Addressing violence,” p. 123), the GRAD staff provide more formal opportunities for their students to practice what they have learned. Some will tutor other offenders or even become GRAD teachers’ aides after graduation (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012). One GRAD completer who “killed a convict” in a gang “hit” on the rec yard years ago has since found a new identity as an aide for his former GRAD teacher (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012). While mentoring can happen on a smaller and more personal scale in the classrooms, can this be expanded to a system-wide mentoring initiative?

One STGMO representative pondered the idea, alluding to a “perfect world” where GRAD completers could spread the GRAD gospel on their new units without giving second thought to their safety for doing so. However, this was quickly dismissed because

the problem I see with an ex-gang member going out into general population and preaching that you don’t need to do this, this is going to get yourself killed. So they’re limited in the influence. If they are a totally serious guy who went through GRAD, did have an enlightening experience, has decided to change his life, and he goes to a unit and starts preaching, “You need to do this,” he’s going to get himself killed. So I wish in a perfect world that would be it – the mentors would come from the GRAD program. Not just mentoring the GRAD program, but mentoring in the units. But that is a pipe dream.

When asked to elaborate on how she would propose the offenders be used as mentors, she explained:

Well, mentoring saying, “Look. I did this.” Like in high school. It’s like gang members go to high schools, and they say, “If you do this, this is what’s going to happen.” And the same thing with, “I’ve gone through the GRAD process. I was in the [Texas Syndicate] for 15 years. I killed, I raped, I sold dope, whatever. I did my time. I went through GRAD. I’ve still got some time to go. Let me tell you, this is something you don’t want to do.” Or, “If you are confirmed over there, you really ought to look into this and see.” But like I said, it doesn’t work that way. In a perfect world it might, but they’ll for sure get killed. I wish there was a process that could some way be done that way, where the inmates could act as mentors (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Mr. A.P. in the STGMO also deliberated on the possibility of creating an in-house, anti-recruitment video to be “presented as an orientation topic” and shared with county jails before inmates are even transferred to TDCJ. But the idea is fraught with potential pitfalls, the primary one being safety. Affirming the stance of his STGMO colleague, he explained:

You wouldn’t want ex-gang members to go on video and tell their stories and be responsible for their actions because they volunteered to do something like that. You wouldn’t want to put them in harm’s way for that....I wouldn’t want to do that to somebody (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Internalizing Norms and Finding a New Reference Group in Prison: Practice and Then Practice Some More

The question remains: How long does it take for these GRAD-endorsed norms to be internalized and become second nature? The answer, unfortunately, is still a mystery; however, one officer responded not by knowing

what it is but what it is not: “It takes a little bit longer to change somebody than nine months” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

During the nine months and beyond, staff and offenders can promote the internalization of new norms and values through repetition and rehearsal, with the hope that responding to conflict without aggression becomes as intuitive as responding *with* aggression was in their past. Seeking out a primary prison group bent on living the general population life presents GRAD offenders with the opportunity to practice with compatible peers. When asked how GRAD offenders are expected to be “productive citizens” and “better convicts” while still living in prison, teacher M.M. advised:

The way I explain it to them is I know you live here day and night. I go through the gate, I leave, and you are here 24/7 and you have to be a survivor. I understand that. But the way that you do that is you pick people who think like you do. You don’t have to run around with these people that are trouble. You don’t have to associate with them. You don’t have to stop and talk to them. You have to remove yourself and find people that are trying in the same direction you are or you are right back in it....You’ve got to learn to find a new environment. And there are people here. You know, [the Ramsey Unit] especially has a lot of college people coming in. And there are people here that you can find that are in the same direction that are not trying to get in trouble (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

She acknowledges that “there’s a lot of GRAD people out there that should be in the same direction. You can find them if you want to” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). And because GRAD completers are transferred to select units upon graduation, they may not have to look very far to find someone who speaks cognitive intervention fluently.

Counselor F.W. repeated the refrain: Find people headed in the “same direction” to thwart a return to the old ways of thinking and acting.

The problem that occurs is in the six months that we have them, we can get them to go in a particular direction. I can turn them. I’m a pretty good salesperson...so I can sell you to follow me, or at least give it a try, because I’ll tell you how hard it’s going to be. But I’ll keep reminding you of where you need to go every day... (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

The support and structure in GRAD corral the offenders to stay on the straight and narrow, to plough ahead and follow the instructor’s lead. When distracted by memories of their past lives, a nudge and some praise, and even the encouragement of fellow group mates, sustain them to carry on, as the instructor shows them another way to live a life.

I’m teaching you to go this way. You’re looking at life this way, and I’m looking at it that way. But you’ve never looked at it that way before. So, I can turn you around and get you to look at it. But when you start walking, you tend to want to do what? Turn back around and look at it back there, because you want to go back to something that’s familiar to you....So you have to surround yourself with people that are trying to go in that same direction. And so, when you start turning, they’ll stop you and say, “Hey, I thought you were going that way.” [...] And what happens is they get out into the general population and guess what? They lose. They lose their support system. So which is something that’s more natural for them to do? Something that they’ve been doing for the last 15 years, or something they’ve been doing for the last nine months? Which comes easier? [...] Well, that principle works on everything you do. So, you’ve got to do it til you overcome it, you know, til it becomes more natural. So, you have to surround yourself with people that are doing it (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).²⁵¹

²⁵¹ The Ellis Unit hosts a volunteer focus group – “it’s called focus because it helps you stay focused” – for offenders who have been through GRAD and have been assigned to general population on the Ellis Unit. According to counselor F.W., the majority of offenders in the group confess to not having been able to “survive” in population without completing GRAD (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

As McCorkle and Korn (1954) explained, “changes in group membership” (p. 88) are at the crux of resocialization. If the offender wants a chance to succeed in general population, he must associate with like-minded people so he does not revert back to his old beliefs and behavior – and only through practice can he advance in the right direction. Counselor F.W. advocates that

what I teach is something you practice; it's not something you remember. It's not a school; it's not a test or anything. It's a way of living. It's a lifestyle. It's something you practice. If you practice it, it will work. If you don't practice it, it's not going to work (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Practice may not make perfect, but the system can hope practice makes good enough.

Several respondents presented examples of the early stages of resocialization where offenders have transferred the classroom concepts into practice with their peers on the GRAD wing. Using the cognitive lexicon introduced in class, the offenders, according to teacher M.M., will “start calling each other’s hand on it [and] start using the models, like ‘They didn’t meet their needs over time yesterday,’ or ‘They did good,’ and ‘That’ll meet your needs’” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Even on the wing and distanced from the classroom, she notes that they “check each other,...use the terminology and hold each other accountable,” stressing that they even uphold this check-and-balance when they transfer to general population (personal communication,

January 6, 2012). Counselor F.W. concurs that the offenders are internalizing and practicing what they have learned.

A lot of them will go out and continue to change their life. But it's not unusual to hear them stop me in the hall or say...I teach them about "conscious" and "unconscious" and about when you're conscious, you're aware of stuff, and when you go unconscious, you're on automatic pilot and everything. And they'll stop and say, "Yeah, I watched an officer. He went unconscious on me the other day, and I just laughed about it." So, you know that they are learning it (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

He also revealed that his students' new general population cellmates benefit vicariously from the GRAD experience: "And their cellies, you hear about their cellies that haven't been through the process. They ended up helping a lot of their cellies" (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

A behavioral shift also accompanies the prospect of resocialization and internalizing new, non-criminal norms. Officer R.C. explained that "in the old days, any disagreement would [result in] a fight," but he has since observed GRAD offenders exhibiting restraint:

Officer R.C.: I've seen when they are in the rec yard or something, there is a disagreement over something, instead of coming to blows, you can see their restraint. There would be a fight any other time, but they know the situation they are in, and they deal with it, or they get help from their friends. They say, "Hey, don't. It's not worth it. Remember what we are doing." They will stick together. They will iron things out. They will talk, and they will apologize. I've seen that, where they have apologized to each other and they just keep going.

Interviewer (Author): In the case of those whom you have seen apologize, do you know if they were from the same gang?

Officer R.C.: Well, I don't know exactly, but I know that some of them were not from the same gangs, that are good confrontations that have happened. I've seen where three or four months later they are still in the program and doing all right (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

An apology in prison is a clear violation of the convict code, but within the isolation of GRAD, an apology is an opportunity to forgive, forget and move on. It may be that the threat of removal and a return to segregation drives the early stages of resocialization.

At the Ellis Unit, counselor C.G. relayed a story about an offender who was compelled to make amends for speaking less than kindly about him soon after arriving for Phase I:

I had one the other day; it was funny. It was in front of [a GRAD sergeant] and [the offender] goes, "I've got to apologize to you." He'd just come over from [Phase I], and he'd been in my class for a few days. He was in rec and I was getting ready to do an [Alcoholics Anonymous] group after work. But he came up [and said], "I've got to apologize to you." And I said, "What did you do? I don't remember where you did anything?" He said, "Over on [the Phase I wing], all I did was run you down the whole time, bad mouth you, saying what an idiot you were, this and that." And he said, "I've learned more in your class in these couple of days than I've learned the whole time I've been here." And I just busted out laughing....[E]ven though [the offender] thought, "Well, I'll just do what I've got to do. The guy's [i.e., the counselor] an idiot." Then you get over here [to Phase II] and the change happens, 'cause he has nothing to gain by apologizing to me or even telling me that, right? There is no gain for it (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

As counselor C.G. attests, if the offender had not apologized, he would have been none the wiser. The skeptics may qualify it as simple manipulation – stroke staff's ego to prime them for future favors – and the believers may register it as the internalization of new norms. Both security staff and instructors are aware

that some offenders may be insincere in their renunciation, but, as Officer R.C. remarked, “You can’t fake [working GRAD] 24/7 for nine months. You might fake it for a little while, but there are always people watching, and they will see what you are about. They can say whatever they want to say, but, really, people are watching them. The teachers, us, counselors” (personal communication, January 6, 2012). Teacher J.E. agreed: “Some of them will fake it to make it. I tell them I know that. And I know which ones they are. I can tell by your attitude, how you answer a question, what your thinking is” (personal communication, January 11, 2012). They eventually absorb the material and, sometimes in spite of themselves and their initial apprehension, apply the lessons learned.

Humanizing Evil: Relationship Between Correctional Officers and GRAD Offenders

All offenders – not just STG members – confined to segregation become accustomed to an over-reliance on security staff to fulfill their basic needs, whether it is being escorted to and from recreation or, in older facilities, to and from the showers. As Officer L.K. explained, “Everything is brought to you” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). But throughout the nine months in GRAD, the offenders learn to rely on the officers for something more – the emotional support to successfully complete the process. Explaining his role in the offender’s success, Officer B.D. understands that to be effective at his job, he has to engage the offenders. He does this simply by taking the time to converse with them.

I treat them fair, and I give them what they're supposed to have, but I'm hard on them. It's funny when you think of it in a penitentiary setting, because I've always been taught "you don't do nothing for these inmates. You give them what they're supposed to have. You don't interact with them." One of the biggest things TDC says is you shouldn't have a personal relationship with an offender. You shouldn't sit there and talk to them for any length of time, this and that. I think that's all a crock of crap, personally. In order for me to get through to one of these inmates, I've got to be able to sit there and interact with them. If I can't sit there and interact with them, then I can't effectively do my job. So I do sit there and talk to the guys a lot of times. If they have a problem, they come and talk to me. For them to sit there and talk to me and they know I'm going to sit there and listen to them, I think that plays a big role in it. If they know I'm not going to say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, get out of my office," then what have I really done? If they know that, then if they get into any kind of trouble or they get into a position where they feel like, "I can't go talk to Officer B.D., he's just going to blow me off," *then I'm being effective in my job, and I'm not being effective in what we're trying to accomplish here.* I think I'm effective in that way because I can come in here, and I can sit and I can listen to them, and I can try to help them out with their problems....A lot of that "don't get personal with the inmates"? I think I almost have to, to be able to get through to a lot of them (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Talking to an inmate on the unit, helping him to change his thoughts and beliefs, teaching him to redirect his anger, and working with him to succeed are what GRAD officers do. Those requisites may not be those of the traditional "correctional officer" job as delineated on an employment vacancy notice, but, at least for Officer B.D., job title and GRAD goals are two distinct concepts. The *job* is observing to be sure offenders are doing what it is expected – being sure they are all accounted for, and the shift runs smoothly – but the *goal* is the *job* plus *role modeling behavior* to invite change.

But are GRAD officers with this orientation viewed by non-GRAD officers more as the "therapist" in McCorkle and Korn's (1954) "custodian vs. therapist" showdown? Officer B.D. does not believe so.

It's not that [we're a bunch of friendly people back there, giving the inmates whatever they want]. Again, I got my name on this inmate when I put them out there in population. If I can't sit in here and help them through these classes and help him through what he's going through, then, again, I can't effectively do my job. I think I play a big role in that, as well as the other officers. If they can't feel the same way about it that I do and do what they do with these guys, then it's not going to be effective (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Officer M.R. further explores the dynamic between Ad Seg security staff and Ad Seg offenders and how this influences the GRAD offender's initial interactions with staff:

When they graduate, we give them a chance to give their testimony. They come up to the podium on graduation day and say a few words. They can reflect or give thanks to, obviously, their family, their support, or their teachers. "I'd like to thank Miss J.T., Miss [Jane Doe]," or whoever. "Thank you all for..." da, da, da. "Sergeant [So-and-So], thank you." And some of them point out officers. "Officer So-and-So, thank you. You know, you helped me that one day," or "I never thought, you know, I always thought officers were...." Because when you come from Seg, and I emphasize this because of where they come from...I mean, I don't know if you've ever been around a Seg officer who has to deal with the screaming, hollering and the banging and everything, but at some point it takes its toll on the officer. So they're very short, most of them. They're just driven to that point. So if I get you upset, if you get me upset, and you're the offender, at some point if you ask me for something, I'm just going to [pretend] I didn't hear you. Or, "You don't want to eat? Now you're not going to eat today." Like, "Wait a minute, you know. I didn't say I didn't want to eat." So, basically, what I'm saying is [the offender's] opinion of staff is not a very pleasant one. And these officers are just here to mess you over, they're here to write bogus cases on you, "they're here to get me kicked out of here" (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

But along the way, the offenders experience a profound shift in their relationships with the security staff, undoubtedly influenced by the lessons taught in the classroom.

At some point when they understand there's a method for it, "He wrote me up because I screwed up," and hopefully it will dawn on them. But, nevertheless, there's this work relationship that we establish with them. And a lot of the offenders, and I see it when they graduate, they point out the officers, "Thank you. Thank you for..." whatever. Some of them, "Whew, I thought that you was going to write me up. You didn't write me up. Whew. I'm glad." And some of them appreciate that. Some of them, from that point on, that's what steered them in the right direction....But many of them do understand or have that appreciation for the staff members there. And probably a different perspective on...what their opinion was of staff, what we're here to do. We're not here to beat up on people (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

As Officer M.R. remarked, the completion ceremonies provide the forum for the graduating offenders to thank not only the helpers (the teachers and counselors), but also the GRAD correctional officers and the STGMO personnel, an act of public gratitude that, at least on the surface, violates the convict code. Perhaps, though, one Ellis Unit offender summed up these new relationships best during the January 2012 completion ceremony when he thanked the GRAD staff for "treating us like people of value, not inmates."

Relationship Between GRAD Officers and Educational Staff in Encouraging Resocialization

GRAD officers and instructors model healthy and positive relationships for the offenders in an effort to teach the ABCs of resocialization. The inmates can see that both disciplines work together and share information – that rehabilitation and security can coexist – as officers and instructors decrease the social distance between their two professional orientations. Several respondents acknowledged a "good" and "wonderful" working relationship with their security and educational counterparts, with teacher J.E. stating, "I see us as them"

(personal communication, January 11, 2012). Officer M.R. credited the congenial atmosphere his GRAD team created for allowing the teachers and counselors to be comfortable enough “to come to me any time they want at any point in time” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). One officer explained that because of the team’s “great communication skills,” the instructors “come out and talk to us” about problems with the inmates, which then become an impromptu part of the day’s curriculum: “Because then the teacher can go back in that classroom, and he can address it. Even if the inmate don’t know that he’s addressing it, he’s addressing it in something that he teaches” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Due to the team atmosphere, educational staff have more direct interaction with the higher-ranking GRAD officers (sergeants, captains and lieutenants), interaction that, according to teacher M.M., was less frequent when teaching outside of GRAD in other facilities (personal communication, January 6, 2012). A Ramsey officer provided the complementary piece, explaining that prior to coming to GRAD, the extent of his interactions with teachers and counselors did not advance beyond a hurried but friendly “hi” to them in the hallway. That’d be pretty much it. I mean, I’d still help them out, but I don’t go through the degree I go through now to help them out” (J.S., personal communication, January 5, 2012). A teacher at the Ramsey Unit was more direct:

[It] is such a different type of relationship than what I had at [another TDCJ unit], because I’m telling you, at [that other unit] with the correctional staff, I felt at times we were a thorn in their flesh, and I have been pleasantly surprised that at times, being in the chow hall, as we call it, that many of these [GRAD] correctional staff will even sit down at the table, even higher-ranking officers and ask, “Hey, how are you doing?” Some of them

said to me when I first got here, “If you have any trouble with anybody, you let me know, and we’ll get it straightened out because we want this to work.” [...] I just hadn’t had that type of relationship before with what I had at the [other unit] because they avoided you like the plague, except for the ones that worked in the school house (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

GRAD fosters a collaborative partnership among both keepers and helpers.

Not all GRAD staff, however, have partaken of this professional love fest. As stated in Chapter 2, McCorkle and Korn (1958) presented the correctional officer’s “definition of the therapist as an enemy of discipline” (p. 98) and the “therapist’s conception of the [officer] as an obstructor of treatment” (p. 98). One counselor perceives the relationship with security staff to be on opposite sides of the therapeutic fence in terms of GRAD’s goals. While he does not accuse his colleagues of tagging him an “enemy of discipline,” the counselor explained that he “[does] not think [GRAD correctional staff] understand what we do. I really don’t. And I don’t think that they believe in what we do” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). He elaborates on the disconnect between the two disciplines, using the example of how innocently praising a GRAD offender in the hallway with a pat on the shoulder was misconstrued by security staff who labeled the behavior “too inmate-friendly”:

When you’re teaching someone you have to have a certain rapport with them; they’re going to learn better. You can’t be, “I’m security and I’m here to crack the whip on you.” One of the things I try to do is make a connection with [the GRAD offenders]. They do a good job, and I’m going, “Way to go.” I’ll do this and I’ll see them in the hall, and some of the ones that I’m like, “Oh man, this is going to be tough for you to make it because some of this stuff, you’re having difficulty. You haven’t quite changed your belief. But at least you’re acting ‘as if,’ and you’re making it.” I’ll see them

in the hall and I'll think, "Man, he's going to go off or maybe not make it." I'll just get a big smile on my face and go up, "Way to go, you're making it. You're doing what you've got to do. How's your beliefs going?" An officer saw me doing that not too long ago, and the [higher-ranking officers] come up to my office. I'm sitting up there and they come in, one sits here and one sits there, and they're like, "What the hell's going on?" I'm like, "Be a little more specific." He goes, "What's this all about?" I said, "Well, this is 'way to go, you're doing a good job.' This is positive reinforcement. This is aftercare." In other words, if I do things and I get no praise for them, typically I'm going to stop doing them. If I do things and I get some reward for them, some form of praise, whatever form is important to me, I keep doing it. I get them in here, and they get used to getting positive reinforcement, which is few and far between in the walls here. They get that and they actually crave that. Some of them see you in the hall, and they're actually looking forward to getting some praise.... [But the officers are] saying, "You can't do that. That's inappropriate. That's too inmate-friendly." I'm thinking to myself, "The whole purpose of this program, ideally – I'm not a dreamer – but ideally, I'm going to turn them into me or you." If I have you and help you with something, say you're a new boot, and I'm a sergeant, and I'm teaching you how to do it, I'm going to go, "Hey, way to go. You did a good job." That positive reinforcement gets you to come back for more; it's the same thing as giving a dog a biscuit, right, because we all like that. We like to be told we're doing a good job. So it's like, "Okay, you want me to change them back to being me and you, but you won't accept that that implies they get treated the same way that I would treat me or you." I'm not going to do something inappropriate, but doing this, to me, is aftercare. This is positive reinforcement that just encourages them to keep up the good effort....It's like patting the dog on the head saying, "Good dog." Like I said, to me, that's just an indication that they don't really believe...I mean, in my mind, that's just my perception that they don't really believe that we're really making a difference....But to me, I care that I'm making a difference (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

When asked how staff could bridge this gap to fully understand each other's role, the respondent resignedly answered that it was "not [his] place to remedy."

I just do what I'm told. If they tell me, "Don't do this," I don't do that and then I adapt and improvise and overcome....I'm worried about the reason I'm here. I'm not here to empty a Seg cell. I could care less. They can stay in the Seg cell if it's just about the money. If it's about the change,

that's why I'm here. I'm here to help you change, to help you change yourself (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012).²⁵²

Because the correctional staff, first and foremost, are there to "provide security" for the instructors and to ensure the offenders have "truly renounced, [are] following the rules, and [being held] accountable" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012), they are the "enforcers" (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) who sometimes must "take more direct action" (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012) to be sure the shifts run smoothly. In this capacity, some of the officers view themselves as "support" for the educational staff so the instructors "can better be able to hopefully affect these guys" (M.R., personal communication, January 5, 2012). Being the "bad guy," according to Officer H.G. (personal communication, January 10, 2012), lets the teachers and counselors focus on their goal of effecting change, rather than "writing cases" and being the "disciplinarian," acts that might preclude an offender from "listen[ing] to...[or] open[ing] up" to the educational staff (H.G.,

²⁵² A counselor at the Ramsey Unit explained that GRAD is "run" by security, unlike other rehabilitative prison programs: "That's the difference between us and Programs, and I try to get the other counselors to see it. Security runs the GRAD process [because these] men are Ad Seg inmates, all the way up until the day that they cross that stage. [In] Programs, the counselors run the program, and security is kind of incidental. Incidentally [because] the counselors are the ones that say, 'You've got to do this,' or at least in [therapeutic communities]. But in GRAD, in the process, security runs the inmates and we're incidental" (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012). To fill any existing void in understanding what the instructors do, another counselor suggested that a requirement for GRAD security staff be to "come and sit in our classes," adding, "We already understand what the security does, because we have to understand to keep our jobs. They don't understand what we do, because what we do is 'stupid' a lot of times, like showing a movie....Security needs to learn that we're trying a different therapy here, rather than the old therapy" (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

personal communication, January 10, 2012). As one officer at Ramsey recognized, “[The instructors] are much more influential than I am as to completing this program” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

One can have a positive working relationship with colleagues – instructors and correctional officers alike – but this may do little to alter the self-perception of some educational staff who consider themselves neither insiders nor outsiders in the system. According to one counselor,

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for security. Security is the reason that I'm able to walk onto this unit and feel safe and be able to give them what they need. I feel safe with security....I look to security for me to be able to walk out the gate every day....Because I work with killers, murderers, rapists, robbers, even though they say they've changed, it's still an “us versus they [i.e., the inmates].” *I'm kind of in the middle.* Security looks at me as a threat because I'm a real world person coming in, in clothes. So I could be the person who is bringing something in, or are they going to change me? They have to watch me just like they watch them (L.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Another teacher used these differences to trigger a “conversation” with his students. He discussed the roles of officer, offender and instructor, and the relationships among them as he prepared his GRAD class for their return to general population.

Matter of fact, one of the questions I asked them yesterday was, “What role do officers play in here? What role do you play in here? What is my role in here?” It was a real interesting conversation. Basically, [according to the offenders] the officer is a person of authority who is never wrong. “I'm the person who's always wrong;” they [the offenders] are. And they see me as...I said, “Honestly, what do you see? I'm not white [reference to offenders as they wear white uniforms].” They say, “Yeah.” They said, “You're really not a gray [reference to correctional staff as officers wear

gray uniforms].” I said, “But I really am. I’m gray. You have to see me that way” (J.E., personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Transformation: It’s Not Just for Offenders Anymore

Although GRAD is centered on offender change, many teachers and officers expressed an equally profound personal transformation. Teacher J.E. summarized his GRAD experience: “I love it here. It’s cool. You get to see...when the light bulb goes off, you see it. When their thinking changes, it’s awesome. It’s really a satisfying thing. It’s not tangible and something you can pick up and hold, but you see it. It’s honestly the most rewarding teaching I’ve ever done” (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Besides producing a “better convict,” as Officer H.G. stated, GRAD has the capability to produce a different kind of officer. Daily life in prison impacts the correctional officer just as it impacts the offender, albeit in different ways. Officer J.S. described the effects of working in prison and Ad Seg, comparing them to those the inmates must also endure:

The way it changes the offenders, it changes us too, prison does. To give you an example, I can’t go out to eat without facing the door, or if I go to a ball game I’m always constantly looking around because I need to know who’s around me. It just changes you mentally being inside the penitentiary, and I think it’s the same way for them being inside that Seg cell 23 hours a day (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer M.R. validates this assessment, acknowledging that the Ad Seg atmosphere – with its “screaming, hollering and the banging” – eventually “takes

its toll on the officer” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). When officers leave at the end of the day, they still take their shift with them.

Another officer identifies with the offenders’ plight of being released from segregation and the overwhelming reality of having to interact with other offenders. Characterizing himself as “not a talking person,” Officer R.C. shared that he was a “very shy person” when he began his career in corrections, but over the years, he “[found] out that [he] talks a lot more than [he] used to talk” when he first started at TDCJ. He elaborated:

I couldn’t just stand in front of people. That’s why I can kind of relate to what [the GRAD offenders] are saying. Being cooped up for all that time and then coming out or having to go to class, doing something that they never did, not even in the world when they were young. They were always skipping school, didn’t go to school. Now they have to come to school and all this. It takes a lot of courage to do that. They do it and they go through the program, and I think it’s a good thing (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

Although he does not directly attribute his change in personality to GRAD itself, he understands the courage the offenders display in confronting their demons and tackling the process – and notes the parallels to his own professional growth as an officer.

Whereas Officer J.S. addressed the effects his professional life has had on his personal (for instance, making him hyper-vigilant when in the free world on his own time), Officer B.D. shares his own story of personal transformation as an officer and his perspective on officer-offender interactions.

Interviewer (Author): Has your take on how you interact with the offenders changed in any way since you first started working [in TDCJ in general population] until you came to GRAD?

Officer B.D.: It's changed in a number of ways and here's why. When I first came into the system, I was young and I was fresh off the streets of [a major metropolitan city in Texas]. When I came in here, I came into TDC in general with the attitude of, "Hey, I'm young, I'm stupid, and if you mess with me, I'm going to mess with you." I was rough on the inmate. As time goes on, as you get older, as you mature in the job and you mature in the way you deal with situations, you kind of learn how to deal with the situation, how to act with the situation, how to talk to some of these guys, because sometimes I might be able to tell one of these offenders, "Hey, you need to stop," in kind of a stern voice but not really so much, and then they're going to stop. Other ones you might have to sit there and really cuss them out, do whatever you've got to do to get them to stop. Now it's kind of changed. But then as I got to GRAD, it's changed even more so because now we're in a whole different situation now. I don't really have to...for the most part, I'm not going to have one of these inmates cussing me out. It's not going to happen because they know they're going to go back to Seg, right? Versus if I work in segregation, you've got inmates cussing you out every day. Now you kind of change modes on how you're acting; you go back there in the segregation wing, and you have to have a whole different mentality dealing with them folks versus dealing with the GRAD offender. Reason being, nine out of your ten segregation offenders don't have anything to lose. They have a lot to lose here at GRAD. So you've got a whole different mentality, so you have to change your own mentality on the way you deal with them for that reason. I can talk to these guys pretty calmly for the most part and get the response that I want out of them. Every once in a while, like I said, you have to get a little bit more stern with them (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Regardless if it is the fear of a return trip to segregation, the promise of a second chance in population, or the assurance of both that keeps GRAD offenders focused on the prize, their behavior is altered, subsequently changing the dynamic between offender and officer. (It is unknown which domino was tapped first to initiate the change – the offender's behavior or the officer's approach – but

the end result is the same: The offenders do not “cuss out” the officer, and the officer has a “whole different mentality.”)

A change in the prison culture effects a change in the prison itself, according to Marc Morial in his testimony in 2006 before the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons. Although he was speaking about the prison as a single entity, the sentiment is applicable to the closed GRAD system. Conversations between GRAD correctional staff and offenders move beyond the stereotypical officers’ barked-out orders and inmates’ expletive-laden responses. Offenders are provided with opportunities to practice their new skills in a safe environment with peers who ascribe to the same rules of the game. Just as GRAD creates new norms for the offenders, it does the same for its officers.

Illustrating this point, Officer L.K. acknowledges the difference between how he handles a problem inmate in general population and one in GRAD. For instance, if a GRAD offender receives a disciplinary case, he will

sit down with [him] and explain, “Hey, this is why you’re getting this disciplinary. This behavior will not be tolerated. This doesn’t mean you’re going to be removed from the GRAD process, but know that if this behavior continues, you’ll probably no longer be with the GRAD process. You need to correct this behavior” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

The behavior is not ignored but rather used as another teachable moment, as the officer role models effective communication skills by outlining the reasons why the behavior was not acceptable, perhaps even addressing how the offender’s actions, in the parlance of the GRAD curriculum, will not meet his needs over

time. From accusation to consequence, the GRAD offender still gets the disciplinary case but *with* an explanation. (Officer L.K. rationalizes this by stressing that “you can’t kick out everybody in GRAD. That would defeat the purpose.”) But for the general population inmate on the receiving end of a disciplinary infraction, the officer confesses that

I am not going to give a population offender that whole, “Sit down, this is why you’re getting disciplinary.” I’m going to ask for a statement, tell them they’re getting disciplinary, and tell them to go back to the house. And that’s it. I’m not interested to see if he’s modifying his behavior. I’m not interested in seeing if he’s a disciplinary problem. We’re going to deal with that. Over here we’re a little more invested in the GRAD process (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Within the confines and safety of GRAD, a different type of officer emerges; however, Officer L.K. does not anticipate this professional transformation accompanying him back to general population where the rules of engagement differ from those in GRAD.

Interviewer (Author): You mentioned before that you might...talk a little bit more through “this is why you’re getting a disciplinary.” You do that with the GRAD offenders as opposed to when you were working in general population?

Officer L.K.: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer (Author): Do you find that happening more often than not when you’re working in GRAD? Do you think that when you end up leaving GRAD, and you’re working back in general population or working with other offenders, do you have to get back to the way you did it before, or can you carry some of your GRAD ways with you?

Officer L.K.: I won’t carry that with me, but I think that’s more of an individual kind of thing. It’s human nature to try to please, to try to say, “If I can help you, I will help you.” To try to say yes. There’s somebody in the

street says, “Hey, can you help me? I need a dollar?” Here’s a dollar. In prison, you have to learn to say no. You have to stick by that “no,” you have to tell them what you want to do because nobody’s a mind reader, tell them, “You need to do this,” and this is how you want them to do it, and you go from there. I stand by that. I say, “No more, no less” (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Outside of GRAD and in the broader prison community, “no” is the North Star. “No” is proof that one is not being “inmate-friendly,” “getting personal,” or going overboard with positive reinforcement by doling out “doggy biscuits.” Far removed from GRAD is a different prison culture, despite existing under the same roof.

The End Is the Beginning

Although a return to general population has been touted as one of the many carrots at the end of the nine-month stick, some offenders are understandably apprehensive about leaving the staff, safety and structure of GRAD. Teacher J.E. incorporates into the curriculum a lesson plan on the offenders’ “concerns of going to population” (personal communication, January 11, 2012). Teacher J.T. addresses the “concern that an active rival gang member may be out to get them,” but quickly adds that “some are very positive that it’s going to be okay...[and everything] is going to fall into place” (personal communication, January 5, 2012). An officer at the Ellis Unit explains that “one of the biggest things they used to worry about was getting into a fight” in general population – and primarily with their new cellmate (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012). However, once placed on a post-GRAD

select “safety unit,” they realize, “Hey, it’s nothing like what everybody’s saying it’s about” (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Upon arrival at their post-GRAD units, the offenders continue to be tested as they acclimate to each unit’s individual culture. Counselor F.W. elaborates:

What the biggest problem they have is the same problem they have when they go out in the free world. They don’t know how to do it. They don’t know the language. They don’t know the world....They think they’re inmates so they think they know a lot about prison. Well, every unit’s different. It’s got its own different personality. You know, these are just a community. All this is, is just 2,500 or around, you know, 3,000 people just stuck here on six, seven acres. You know, it’s just a community. It’s completely different. We don’t think like you think. The rules are different. It’s a different society, completely different. I mean, when I walk through the gate, I’ve got to leave almost everything out there and understand that I’m moving in another world. And you either learn how to live in that world or bad things happen (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

Each prison facility affords GRAD completers endless opportunities to continue practicing so that eventually, when they “turn back around and look at” what was once familiar (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012), hopefully they will see their relaxed and confident GRAD reflection in that “second photograph” yet to be taken (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

GRAD VERSION 2.0: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INSIDE

When asked to design a blueprint for a revamped GRAD, several respondents first suggested minor policy and logistical changes. For example:

- Implement a “screening process [to assess] literacy skills” (J.T., personal communication, January 5, 2012);

- Ensure bed space in general population is immediately available when offenders transition to Phase III (M.M., personal communication, January 6, 2012);
- “Desensitize” the offenders by having them “rec” a few at a time during Phase I (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012);
- Limit the number of times an offender can be recycled to participate, especially if repeated attempts prevent the offender next in line a timely opportunity (R.C., personal communication, January 6, 2012); and
- Update the policies and procedures so it is “not so vague in [some] areas” and, aside from the timelines, ensure the process is run identically and consistently on both units (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012).

What Next?

The future of GRAD, according to one STGMO representative, might lie in a bigger physical space where all prospective GRAD participants, including those undergoing the two-year Disassociation Investigation, can transition and prepare together, before they take that first walk to a segregation cell in Phase I.

I envision one GRAD process on a larger scale, perhaps. And maybe even where we can house these Seg people who are in this two-year DI process at one facility so that would cut down [budget-wise], and all the transporting. If we could bring one or two classes in as one finishes, then the next one starts up, then there’s one waiting. I think that would save a lot of money and free up some Seg beds, because you would have Seg

beds dedicated at one unit to this process, freeing up those Seg beds at the units from which we pulled them (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Although the idea has yet to be proposed, she imagines that having GRAD-offenders-in-waiting at arm's length in one centralized location would allow STG staff on the new GRAD facility the "opportunity...to call [the offenders] in and say, 'Are you sure you want to do this? This is what's going to happen if you do it. These are the advantages. These are the disadvantages'" (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). Armed with that knowledge, the offenders can begin the mental preparation for the challenges that lie ahead.

But the overwhelmingly popular recommendation by GRAD security staff, the STGMO and instructors was to lengthen the entire process – and, if that is not feasible, then do no harm and definitely do not shorten it. Mr. A.P. in the STGMO stressed: "I just would not want anybody to minimize it any less than what it currently is, to take away [from the nine months]" (personal communication, January 4, 2012).²⁵³ Teacher J.T. believes that Phase II should be expanded, explaining that

²⁵³ As noted in Chapter 2, in 2011 during the 82nd Texas Legislative Regular Session, Committee Substitute House Bill (CSHB) 3764 was introduced that called for a study of the use of Ad Seg in Texas prisons and would have required TDCJ to submit annual reports to the Governor and select members of the Texas Legislature on the issue. The bill also would have required TDCJ to "develop...a program that provides an opportunity for an inmate who is confined in [Ad Seg] based on the inmate's membership in a gang or security threat group to return to the general prison population. The program *may not exceed eight months in length* [italics added]" (Texas House of Representatives, 2011, p. 5). The bill made its way out of the House Corrections Committee, but did not advance further.

[there are] a lot of expectations to ask a person who's had a belief for 40 years, such as the "White race is the supreme race, and anybody else is trash, and they need to be eliminated." They've had this belief for 40 years. Their family believed it. It's a lot to ask them to make some of these huge changes that are needed for them to make, or they're still going to be doomed for failure....I want my students to understand [the material]. I don't want them to remember, "Yeah, we talked something about it." I want them to *understand it and use it* (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Officer M.R. offered an example of one offender who needed and was given extra time to complete the process on his own terms and his own timeline:

We recycled this guy twice already – that means he's been pushed back a couple of times – [and] he's bought himself another couple of months of the program. Where it's normally a nine-month program, now it's like a 13-month program for him. That added time helped him. It helped him deal, personally, with his change that he's undergoing, his individual change (personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Based on his own conversations with the teachers and counselors, Mr. A.P. in the STGMO relayed their recommendation that Phase II be expanded, possibly to six months:

Because it is [currently] four months, and they tell us it takes almost half of that to really break down the walls and the barriers before they really start getting into what it's about. Then they only have two more months with them, and, for some people, let's say, two months may be a long time. If they had four months of that type after the fact, if Phase II was six months, they said that they would probably be even better than what it is now (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Acknowledging that adding time to Phase II – or any phase – is not an easy endeavor, as it would have a ripple effect on other issues, such as housing, the availability of staff, and the school schedule, Mr. A.P. answered his own

rhetorical question: “Could it be done? I don’t think it’d be impossible to do. It wouldn’t be impossible” (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

An officer at the Ramsey Unit identified Phase III as needing to be longer, as he does not believe the offenders have sufficient time in general population to be monitored for how they will eventually behave when the training wheels are removed: “[It’s a] ‘when the eyes aren’t on you’ kind of thing. When your momma’s away, how are you going to act” (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012)? Additional time in Phase III might be used to assess how well the offenders have internalized the norms and beliefs presented in GRAD – and to what degree they have been resocialized.

RENOUNCING THE GANG, BUT NOT THE CRIME

Inside Prison

If GRAD offenders can indeed leave behind the gang and its lifestyle, can they also abandon the norms and values of the broader prison community to which they return – not to strive for perfect behavior, but to be, as one counselor describes it, “indistinguishable from all the other non-gang members” in population (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012)? According to one law enforcement officer, shunning the criminal lifestyle while still incarcerated is a near impossibility.

I remember GRAD convicts that were working with the Tango Blast, doing business with [them]. They were technically not doing *gang* business, but they were still doing illegal business, you know, and like I said...a convict is always going to be a convict. I don’t care where you put them; I don’t

care if you put them in the highest security level, he's gonna be a convict. He's gotta do whatever it takes to survive. If you put him in a minimum security unit or a trusty camp, then he's going to do whatever he needs to do to play the game, play the system to his advantage to survive... (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011).

The officer cited another example of a former Aryan Circle member and GRAD completer who resorted to long-distance extortion from prison, eventually netting “over \$3800 in his [inmate] account.” He did this not for the gang, but because of the “criminal mentality” of “still [being] a convict” (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011). And counselor C.G. asserts that while GRAD is “changing them and getting them out of the gang behavior,” they continue “doing their little hustle like everyone does, but they’re not doing the gang hustle, which is totally unacceptable” (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

Police Officer D.E. also spoke of the group formation process among GRAD completers who were placed on select units after graduation. He recalls former members (and GRAD completers) – “it didn’t matter whether you were ex-Aryan Brotherhood of Texas, ex-Aryan Circle, ex-Texas Syndicate [or] ex-Mexican Mafia” – who “automatically gravitated to each other” when assigned to a post-GRAD unit. The officer contends that they re-grouped not so much for the “sense of unity,” but rather “self-preservation” and offered this example:

If I have two ex-Texas Syndicate [TS] members that were on my unit and then another ex-TS member got there from GRAD, he's gonna go back to those GRAD convicts, and, it's like, “Okay, where are my threats here? Who's my threat here? Who do I need to look out for?” But then it evolved from self-preservation to making money. And, like I said, the criminal mind is always there....You get rid of that gang label, you're still a

criminal, you're still a convict, and you still gotta survive. So, it started like that from self-preservation that they all got together. They used to rec together, go to eat together, go hang out together, and then just went like, "Oh shit, you know, we have a chance to make money here. Why not?" (personal communication, September 9, 2011).

Technically, they are not engaging in gang activity, nor have they recommitted themselves to their former gang, but history has identified "self-preservation" as a precursor to gang formation behind prison walls.

Meanwhile, Back on the Street

The Texas prison system can assert that its articulated and primary goals are to (1) release former STG members from segregation (check!), (2) produce "better convicts" with fewer disciplinary infractions while incarcerated (because data are not available on the number of disciplinaries issued and received, this deserves a cautious check!), and (3) teach them how to use the tools to change their behavior in the general population milieu (check!) – and not reduce recidivism. As Ms. T.G. with the STGMO previously stated,

The only thing I consider a black mark against GRAD is that they commit a new crime. But again, it's really not, because *GRAD is not intended to keep them from getting out and committing new crimes*. GRAD is intended to get them out of the gangs into general population. What they do with the rest of their life is their own decision" (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Although TDCJ can “get [the offenders] safely out of Seg into the population,” the system “can’t control what happens on the streets” (A.P., personal communication, January 4, 2012).²⁵⁴

Interviews with law enforcement reveal that, for some released offenders, “their own decisions” may include a complete renunciation of the gang, but not the crime. According to Police Officer I.C.,

It goes back to my way of thinking that just because they stopped being gang members, they didn’t stop being criminals. A lot of these guys are career criminals and instead of committing crimes as a gang – they’re no longer a gang member – they’re just committing crimes on their own or with their own separate little crew that are not members of [their former gang]... (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

Released GRAD offenders are being arrested, but for “committing other crimes that have nothing to do with the gang” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011).

While the offenders did “what they had to do to renounce the gang [and] to make it into GRAD” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011), both law enforcement officers interviewed agree that the criminal lifestyle, for some, is “all they know” (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011) and the gang identity so entrenched, it is “who they are” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011). Once distanced from GRAD, general population and prison itself – and without someone by their side to “get them to go in a particular

²⁵⁴ One law enforcement officer reminds the reader that “it’s always been that the inside runs the outside” (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011).

direction” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012) – are they able to continue the process of internalizing the GRAD-sponsored norms and beliefs to become “productive citizens”? Based on his experience, Police Officer I.C. – notwithstanding the exceptions – believes otherwise:

But once they go back out, like the saying says, always in a cliché, they find Jesus in jail, in prison, but they leave him there when they get out. A lot of these guys, they revert back to their [old behavior]. That's who they are. They've been street gang members, they've been involved in gang life most of their life (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

They may embrace the change while undergoing the GRAD process, but upon release to the free world, it proves more difficult to practice to perfect – it is as if trying to sustain the enthusiasm and dedication of a New Year's resolution in May.

SUMMARY

The GRAD process is just the beginning of resocialization. Its goal is to slowly and methodically strip away the effects of a previous life lived in solitary and, through the use of small group norms and shared experiences with a new band of brothers, change the attitudes and behavior of offenders once considered too dangerous to be among the dangerous. The GRAD culture, with its emphasis on helping one another and becoming a team, supplants those of segregation and general population, enveloping the offenders in a world of normative change.

Upon graduation and complete immersion in the general population, the offenders continue the resocialization process, as each must learn to reconcile GRAD's recently-imposed new norms and values with those of the broader prison community. It remains a challenge, even upon release from prison, where they are presented with new opportunities to associate with peers past and present. And when they migrate from one social group to another, it remains to be seen which conduct norms travel with them.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study's goals and methodology, followed by a discussion of the major findings and then an acknowledgement of its limitations. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and implications for social work.

DISCUSSION

This research is a case study focused on the resocialization of prison gang members through the lens of TDCJ's GRAD process, a nine-month, three-phase voluntary process whereby confirmed STG members renounce their gang membership and disassociate from the gang while still incarcerated. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice implemented its gang renunciation process to relinquish its dependence on segregating confirmed prison gang members and to provide them a way to transition out of segregation. The GRAD process has been in place since 2000 with more than 2,600 offenders completing it, but little information, other than anecdotal evidence, is available to support or disprove its success or effectiveness at de-gangng and resocializing prison gang members for the long haul.

The study aimed to identify how the GRAD process replaces gang culture from a gang-involved prisoner, and also sought to uncover the process of cultural and normative change inside a closed system, primarily through the eyes of GRAD officers and instructors, and how their varied viewpoints influence the

renunciation process. This study did not strive to answer if the GRAD process *works*, or even if it is effective at preventing former prison gang members from ever engaging or participating in gang life after GRAD, but rather it examined resocialization and changing norms, and proposed why administration would even expect such a process to be successful inside the prison walls. Knowing that individuals can be socialized into a criminal subculture in prison, this study attempted to determine if the process can then be reversed.

As previously stated in Chapter 2, no studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of various STG management strategies, including the use of Ad Seg and the implementation of renunciation programs in prison. Interviews revealed that the prison system's ideas behind GRAD parallel those of the New Jersey Department of Corrections' (NJDOC) STG management strategy: to "have safer prisons" and not necessarily to "make ex-gang members," which it deemed a "secondary benefit" (New Jersey Office of Legislative Services, 2006, p. 85). As presented in Chapter 5, the STGMO's T.G. identified "remov[ing] that [gang] mindset" as a "sub-purpose" of GRAD, but preparation for a life lived in population is its "main purpose" (personal communication, January 4, 2012).²⁵⁵

METHODOLOGY REVIEW

Interviews were conducted with 16 individuals selected through both convenience and purposeful sampling methods: two law enforcement officers,

²⁵⁵ It is worth another mention that the prison gang members placed in the NJDOC's STG Management Unit do not participate "willingly" (New Jersey Office of Legislative Services, 2006, p. 85), unlike those in GRAD who voluntarily renounce to voluntarily participate.

two STGMO staff, six correctional/security staff (four at Ramsey and two at Ellis), three teachers (two at Ramsey and one at Ellis), and three counselors (one at Ramsey and two at Ellis). Written informed consent was obtained, and interviewees were advised that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. With permission, interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by a professional in the field. The open-ended questions in the semi-structured interviews addressed resocialization, the GRAD process and its curricula, and STG policy-related topics, such as the institutional and administrative perspectives on STG management and the use of Ad Seg; organizational responses to change; the goals and perceived success of the GRAD process; and staff perspectives on how they view not only their and their colleagues' work in GRAD, but also offender change.

Data were collected from several sources, including documentation (i.e., TDCJ documents and reports available on its public Web site; and newspaper accounts and other open source information on prison gang-related activity, the Texas prison system, and the GRAD process), archival records (i.e., extant, aggregate-level data requested from TDCJ on STGs, Ad Seg and the GRAD population), interviews, direct observations (i.e., attendance at completion ceremonies; impressions of the GRAD wings and physical layout; and interactions between officers and offenders, offenders and instructors, and instructors and officers), participant-observation,²⁵⁶ and physical artifacts (i.e., the cognitive intervention and anger management curricula; and posters on the wall

²⁵⁶ Because my time on the units was limited during the data collection period, I relied on recall of past GRAD visits over the years as a non-student to both the Ramsey and Ellis Units.

depicting various models and related concepts, such as “thinking errors” and the Franklin Reality Model).

Themes were extracted from each interview, and the data coded to reflect the participants’ “views and experiences” (Drisko, 1997, p. 190), and then organized into categories. The relationships among clusters of themes were identified, and participants’ responses were used to challenge and contradict previously held beliefs about GRAD. Their narratives shaped the analysis presented in Chapter 5.

PRISONIZATION AND PRISON RESOCIALIZATION IN PRINT: “WHERE’S WALDO’S” EXTENDED VACATION

Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature, beginning with Clemmer’s (1940) introduction of the term “prisonization” to describe the process of assimilation into the prison culture, which was followed up 18 years later with Sykes’s inside examination of the prison as a social system to explain how culture and individual behavior are derived from incarceration itself. The early 1960s ushered in additional research on prisonization and the effects of a life lived behind bars (including Wheeler’s empirical test of prisonization in 1961, with Goffman’s treatise on life in a “total institution” published that same year; followed in 1962 by Irwin and Cressey’s “importation model” to account for inmate misconduct and criminal prison subcultures; and, a year later, Garabedian’s research furthering the association among prisonization, the role of prison subcultures, and the amount of time served and remaining before release), which

was then succeeded by a decades-long hiatus in the world of prisonization research. In 1993, Hunt et al. arrived with their analysis of the “other dynamics of prison life” (p. 398) to explain inmate misconduct, including gang formation, prison overcrowding, and the emergence of the “Pepsi Generation” of newer and younger inmates into the carceral mix. By 2005, Hochstetler and DeLisi suggested an “integrated/lifestyle-exposure” model of inmate misconduct, whereby individuals with a “crime-conducive identity” who “[act] criminal[ly]” (p. 259) in the free world have an easier transition to the prison environment. And then all appeared quiet on the prisonization and resocialization front.²⁵⁷

MAJOR FINDINGS

Ever since I was first introduced to the GRAD process more than a decade ago, I had always been told it was an unequivocal “success,” despite the fact that no tracking mechanism or evaluation component had been designed. I wondered how a process could be touted as such without an audit system to track and monitor the offenders once they were released to the general population. (At the time, GRAD offenders being paroled or released from prison were the rare exception.) Years later, its success was tempered with a qualifier: “We have reconfirmed x number of GRAD completers as STG members.” Informal and collegial debates over the years with TDCJ staff centered on my one-trick-pony (and probably tiresome) question: “But how do you *know* it is a

²⁵⁷ The literature review on prisonization and resocialization for this study is current as of early 2012.

success if you have not articulated what it is successful or effective at doing?” And so began my formal inquiry.

Definitions of Success

Before proclaiming GRAD an overwhelming success, its goals first needed to be identified. The overarching goal, according to GRAD and STGMO staff interviewed, is to prepare the offenders for reintegration back into the general prison population by providing them with the “tools” of cognitive intervention to alter their thoughts and beliefs, which in turn influence their behavior. It is benefits with benefits. As Ms. T.G. in the STGMO explained, the purpose of GRAD is “to teach [the offenders] how to live with other people” since they have been living for years in isolation (personal communication, January 4, 2012). The lessons learned produce a “better convict” (H.G., personal communication, January 10, 2012) who does “not [cause] problems any more than just the average inmate” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012). The GRAD process is an on-going experiment in small group formation and normative change that is designed to create an offender who, once dropped back into population, is less prone to collecting disciplinary infractions within the penal institution – and not necessarily to convert a criminal into a non-criminal. According to the STGMO, GRAD is “not intended to keep them from getting out and committing new crimes” (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012). Gresham Sykes (1958) would most likely agree with this basic assessment of

GRAD's limitations, as he stated in *The Society of Captives*, "Of all the tasks which the prison is called upon to perform, none is more ambiguous than the task of changing criminals into noncriminals" (p. 17).

Those officers not assigned to GRAD can appreciate the "ambiguity" of transforming STG members into "former" prison gang members, primarily because they lack the insider's view on what GRAD hopes to accomplish. According to GRAD staff interviewed, non-GRAD officers doubt the offenders' sincerity in fully renouncing their gang membership. Believing the process unwittingly releases still-active gang members into the general population and gives them free rein and a false sense of prison life – because "it's not like that when they go to population" (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012) – security staff not affiliated with GRAD have yet to buy into the process's premise and promise of producing a more manageable offender through nine months of hoped-for change.

De-Ganging Not a Focus

I had my own preconceived notions that removing the gang from the gangster was GRAD's main objective, but with each passing TDCJ interview, I realized otherwise. I, however, was not alone in this belief, as it appears that those not affiliated with the process, including the law enforcement officers interviewed, also laid claim to "de-ganging" as fundamental to GRAD. *The GRAD process is more about the transition from segregation to population –*

removing the Ad Seg mindset and distancing oneself from that “cell warrior” culture – with offenders who just happen to have been gangsters, and uses the gang background to the prison’s advantage. (That is, these offenders are already predisposed to joining groups and working together, albeit typically for criminal purposes). Admittedly overlooked in my preliminary assessment, the Ad Seg mentality and its derived behavior, characterized by “yelling and cussing,” “threatening to beat each other up,” and seeking negative attention (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012), are the first layers of culture to be removed. Extracting the Ad Seg culture from the prisoner, and not necessarily the gang from the gangster, is of initial and paramount importance.²⁵⁸

Although gang renunciation was not an articulated goal, its inverse – gang reconfirmation – is tagged as one of TDCJ’s primary measures of GRAD success, along with the total number of offenders completing the process. As stated in Chapter 5, it could be that returning to the gang proves the offender unable to be resocialized in a short nine months, as he reverts back to the familiarity of his original primary prison group, having failed to internalize the

²⁵⁸ It is almost as if being in the gang is incidental to the process itself. The GRAD mission statement references offenders “who choose to voluntarily renounce their gang affiliation,” which is simply a descriptive qualifying phrase for the *type* of offender permitted to participate. Certainly it is hoped that the lessons learned and tools provided will aid the offender in maintaining his distance from the prison gang once he completes the process, but the process is not meant to prepare them *for* renunciation. For TDCJ, that has already happened when the offender signed on the dotted line to initiate the two-year Disassociation Investigation.

norms and beliefs introduced in GRAD. Suggestions for broadening the measures for success will be discussed in the next section.

Modifying Criteria for Success

Like any program, GRAD is not limited to *doing* only one thing; outcomes should be measured simultaneously to address all anticipated effects to satisfy the short- and long-term goals of those inside and outside the prison system. One can have multiple successes (or lack of) at multiple points in the process. Measures can be identified “before, during and after” GRAD: The “before” might focus on successfully completing the two-year Disassociation Investigation and meeting all eligibility requirements. “During” measures might include the number of removals, both voluntary and non-voluntary, and the reasons behind each. Throughout the process, not engaging in gang-related activity might be counted as a success for renunciation; yet, if an offender steals bread, possesses contraband, or is involved in other convict-related behavior, that may be a strike against the internalization of new norms, but it may also be considered a success for renunciation. An “after” measure may be defined by remaining segregation-free (both administrative and disciplinary) and in the general population, and taking advantage of prison programs and work opportunities. Conversely, a return to segregation could prove to be simultaneously a success and a failure: If the offender is not referred back to segregation for gang-related reasons, then

score one for a “successful” renunciation, but also mark a strike for failing to use the “tools” of GRAD in his bid for resocialization.²⁵⁹

The difference between TDCJ’s idea of success and that of the free world is apparent in the prison system’s narrowly-defined measures. As one law enforcement officer noted, his view of GRAD’s success lies not solely in the ever-increasing number of graduating offenders who lead quiet, structured lives in general population, but in the long term once they return to the broader community: “To me, flat out, success would be pretty clear cut: You’re paroled from prison, finished the GRAD, left the gang, and [are] no longer in trouble. That’s what success looks like to me” (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011). To satisfy the standard for success beyond the walls, measures could be expanded to include renouncing not only the gang, but also a life of crime. Because the two worlds are inextricably linked – as one law enforcement opined, “It’s always been that the inside runs the outside” (D.E., personal communication, September 9, 2011) – one can use multiple measures to identify multiple outcomes to obtain a more comprehensive picture of what GRAD proposes to do

²⁵⁹ As a starting point to determine the degree to which these new norms have been internalized, the prison system could also follow up with offender self-report data, coupled with staff observations, to assess offenders’ thoughts and feelings about their departure from segregation and entrance into GRAD, and then their subsequent release into population or to the free world. Might earning inmate trusty status or seizing other educational and vocational opportunities qualify as objective criteria used to further measure their success in becoming “better convicts” and “productive citizens”? In addition, observed changes in their physical appearance, as security staff and instructors noted, could be incorporated. Teacher J.E. offered this suggestion: “I don’t know how you measure ‘physical’ when they relax, but they are very relaxed when you see them in the hallway, and they are very glad to see you and to share with you their first contact visit with their mom in 20 years, or something. I mean, they’re more relaxed. I don’t know how you measure that” (personal communication, January 11, 2012).

and actually does on both the inside and the outside.

Pre-Resocialization and GRADitude: The Ad Seg Effect in Preparing for Change

Also revealed in the narratives was the impact of the length of time spent in segregation (prior to renunciation) to increase one's chances of successfully completing GRAD. The process hinges on the transition from Ad Seg to general population, as stated earlier.²⁶⁰ This transformation begins upon admission to Phase I, where the offenders gradually shift their self-perception away from being an Ad Seg inmate to a GRAD student, from solitary confinement to General Population Lite. The GRAD culture, with its emphasis on helping one another and uniting to form a cohesive group, supplants the Ad Seg and general population cultures, enveloping the offenders in a supportive world of normative change. It is unknown to what degree GRAD extracts the gang from the gangster, but, according to respondents, segregation extracts the fight and opposition, replacing them with a momentary resignation that later turns into gratitude and appreciation for GRAD. As an STGMO official observed, it is segregation that "took the gangster out of them" (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007) and primed them for a chance at GRAD success.

²⁶⁰ GRAD is actively a better approach to renunciation than simply confining an offender to segregation for a finite number of years, and then – if he proves he is no longer involved in gang activity – releasing him into general population. This catch-and-release approach overlooks a key element: incremental change from living a solitary life to one in population.

Prisoner of War Effect to Maintain Sanity?

The effects of Ad Seg were catalogued in Chapter 2, with the narratives in Chapter 5 delineating the type of offender able to survive in segregation, as identified by Police Officer I.C.: The older prison gangs were “more selective” in their recruitment, and were attracted to “‘hardcore’ guys” who were “more disciplined,” “more mature in their way of thinking,” and “could do time in [Ad Seg] and not be affected” (personal communication, September 26, 2011).

Without having information on the mental health status of Ad Seg STG members, one can only speculate about the toll segregation exacts on them. For those original GRAD offenders with 10-20 years in solitary who successfully waded through the curricula and assignments, and acclimated to sharing space with a cellie who, at times, breathed too loudly or talked too much, their ability to be less “affected” by segregation might lie with this “hardcore” mindset. Their gang affiliation not only landed them in segregation, but also inadvertently prepared them for survival in that environment.

An STGMO official loosely compared these segregated STG members to prisoners of war (POWs) to explain their ability to remain psychologically present: Prisoners of war were incarcerated “without doing anything wrong. They were heroes. It’s the same thing with these guys. They think they’re heroes to follow the gangsters, and The Man [the prison system] is doing this to them” (P.F., personal communication, April 13, 2007). Do STG members then view

themselves more as POWs than career criminals who were handed a raw deal in court? If they view themselves as political prisoners, whether they are incarcerated for “the gang cause” or for another reason, does that make them less susceptible to the psychologically deleterious effects of segregation? Are they able to ward off the effects of segregation because incarceration is one step toward respect and closer to martyrdom? Those who are still entrenched in the prison gang life have a purpose and gang-imposed structure and discipline that fill each day in Ad Seg and may strengthen their hold on “sanity” and inoculate them against the detrimental effects of solitary. With a vested interest in the success and longevity of their criminal organization, they remain focused on and dedicated to their own end goal: the gang’s survival.

FROM GRAD TO SEGREGATION: LESSONS LEARNED AND SHARED

How might a process like GRAD be applied to the broader Ad Seg community that will allow segregated, non-STG offenders the opportunity to earn their way out of confinement and into the general prison population, or – if a return to population is not an option – to a less restrictive environment once their behavior indicates such a change is warranted? Several years ago, one East Texas warden suggested incorporating a “quasi-Ad Seg-type” program for those prison gang members not willing to actively and formally renounce, but who, for all intents and purposes, had otherwise disassociated by dropping off their gangs’ radar years earlier (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007).

Having “earned the right to have a little more movement” (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007), the warden envisioned a nesting doll approach to segregation, whereby offenders could be double-celled on a wing in a high-security unit, and have the opportunity to interact and recreate with a few other offenders, all being monitored in a secure environment distanced from the general population. A similar transitional program might be able to accommodate non-STG offenders in segregation – with a primary purpose of incrementally increasing the amount of interaction they have with a small group of offenders also participating in this experiment.

As revealed in Chapter 5, the supportive relationships that emerge among GRAD offenders and staff offer a front row seat to a new culture that has the potential to be transferred to other restrictive settings. Both instructors and security staff humanize the offenders and enter into the process with the expectation that it can and will work. GRAD officers take the time to talk to GRAD offenders and, at times, assume the dual role of correctional officer and helping professional, thus decreasing the social distance between officers and offenders. It is the triumvirate of the officer, instructor and offender that prepares the GRAD process to function as a well-oiled resocialization machine.

In addition, both disciplines – security and rehabilitation – work collaboratively toward common GRAD goals; the only way to reach these goals is to cast aside petty differences, learn about each other’s profession, and function

as a consistent and cohesive team. The instructors do not operate as “enem[ies] of discipline” (McCorkle & Korn, 1958, p. 98), neither running interference nor preventing officers from doing their job, and they have shown that they can use their forum in the classroom to address issues between offenders and officers to role model appropriate interactions. Similarly, by virtue of consistently working with the same staff and offenders, the officers have ample opportunities to become co-therapists rather than “obstructor(s) of treatment” (McCorkle & Korn, 1958, p. 98).

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to this study still remain and merit further attention. As mentioned in Chapter 4, over the years, my presence at the STGMO and on the Ramsey and Ellis Units was neither unexpected nor unusual; I had attended several past GRAD completion ceremonies, chatted with officers and instructors, and, while accompanying STGMO staff to the Ramsey Unit, talked briefly through barred cell doors with segregated offenders in Phase I. While this familiarity helped in gaining access to a closed world, it also increased the risk of reflexivity. I attempted to minimize the degree to which I “changed [the research world]” (Liebling, 1999, p. 156) by first being aware of this reality. During the course of one interview, an Ellis counselor mentioned that, due to the physical layout of the Ramsey Unit, officers were required to sit in the classroom for added security. When asked if the officers’ presence impacted the offenders’ responses – or their

willingness to respond honestly – he said, “It’s just like if we had a camera in here right now [during the interview]. We might be conscious of it for a few minutes, and [then] you’ll forget about it” (F.W., personal communication, January 10, 2012). I hoped that my quiet presence on the unit or at the ceremonies would be met with an equal amount of forgetfulness.²⁶¹

As a consequence of the information available from TDCJ, the limited aggregate-level data posed another critical gap in providing a deeper understanding of the process and its effects. My initial request for descriptive data on all GRAD completers since 2000 was modified to a more manageable examination of the Ramsey and Ellis offenders who completed the process in January 2012, the month during which interviews were conducted and completion ceremonies attended. I was advised by TDCJ that the data I originally requested was not easily accessible or in a centralized location, and that “better and more complete” statistics had been kept only since 2008. For example, data on the cumulative length of time in Ad Seg prior to renunciation, and on individual STGs regarding completion rates and decisions to renounce (i.e., were members of one gang more likely and willing to renounce than

²⁶¹ Although I was unable to provide respondents an opportunity to “member check” and review a draft of this research to see if I had misinterpreted any of their comments, I did allow one colleague (P.F.), whose pre-data collection interviews (which were classified as archival records) factor greatly in the study, an opportunity to review the first four chapters. He responded that he had no suggested changes or comments, explaining that because it was my research, the interpretation was mine alone. “Too many cooks in the kitchen,” he said, would water it down to only cold, hard facts devoid of independent thought and interpretation, and then it would no longer be “my work.”

another?) were either incomplete or non-existent. Had these numbers been available, they may have supported or refuted some of the respondents' narratives.

Another limitation to the study was not requesting or conducting interviews with non-GRAD officers, and administration and executive staff. Although GRAD and the STGMO staff participated, interviews with the wardens at the Ramsey and Ellis Units, along with those at some of the safety and transition units, might have yielded different opinions and beliefs about GRAD. Just as information about the process and its mission fails to make it to non-GRAD officers who think "the state's being friendly" (B.D., personal communication, January 10, 2012) and GRAD offenders are "spoil[ed]" (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012), it could be that upper administration's ideas on the goals, success and effectiveness, and the process itself differ from those of GRAD and the STGMO staff. Similarly, rather than relying solely on GRAD staff's second-party testimonials about non-GRAD officers' beliefs about the process, obtaining that information directly would have enhanced the findings.

Finally, the issue of generalizability, which is an inherent limitation of qualitative research, remains. According to one officer,

Many states have looked to Texas as to how to deal with gang-related offenders. Other states laughed when they said, "You're going to do what? You're going to let rival gang members out with each other and interact?" [...] It could have ended disastrously, but those first couple

groups that graduated, every single person graduated. And the other states were like, “Wow.” I think it’s pretty cutting edge, and I think they are trying to model our GRAD process for their own (L.K., personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Before replicating GRAD and transferring the process “as is” to other state departments of corrections, one would first have to complete a cultural assessment of the prison facilities where the process would be implemented and tailor GRAD to that particular department’s needs. For example, TDCJ’s GRAD offender population is overwhelmingly White and Hispanic; this demographic composition would not be the same if implemented in a state system with a larger African-American STG population. The number of offenders in each group and the length of the process also may differ based on physical resources and other logistical considerations. (For example, in 1994, the Connecticut Department of Correction developed an 18-month program [National Institute of Corrections, 2000], and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, in March 2012, proposed a five-phase “Step Down Program,” with each step lasting a “minimum of 12 months” [see “Security Threat Group Prevention, Identification and Management Strategy”]).

FUTURE RESEARCH

The following suggestions for future research address some of the gaps and questions that arose from this dissertation.

For Whom the GRAD Calls

This study has laid the foundation for the future empirical examination of the effectiveness of such renunciation programs. Implicit in any evaluation is figuring out not only does the process work, but also why and how it works (or does not work), for which offenders it works (or does not), and under what conditions. For example, might prison gang renunciation and resocialization efforts work best for those offenders who have spent a certain number of years in segregation prior to renouncing, as respondents suggest? Or for those members who held rank or leadership positions and can use their influence in prosocial ways during the course of group formation? Or are those nearing parole less likely to renounce? (Perhaps it would be even more problematic to renounce when freedom is imminent, and one would have to answer to that decision once back on the street. In prison, one might have a finite number of enemies in fairly close quarters, but at least the presence of prison staff nearby increases one's odd at safety, but, in the free world, one has no expected promise of protection, or an entourage in an officer's gray uniform.) And are those with longer sentences more likely to renounce? More descriptive information on the type of offender who renounces – and at what stage of his prison gang career – might be used to increase his chances of success in the process and beyond.

Impact of Incarceration History on STG Membership

Additional studies may examine the offender's incarceration history to

identify at what stage in his imprisonment he was confirmed as a prison gang member. (Granted, a gap might exist between the time he officially joined and when the prison system gathered sufficient evidence to validate him as an STG member.) For those with multiple periods of incarceration, did they join during the first, second or subsequent stints in prison? Perhaps they had family support during their first period of incarceration, but after returning time and time again, support may have lessened, as blood family distanced itself (either voluntarily or physically due to the assigned prison unit's distance from home base). When the question was posed to Mr. A.P. in the STGMO, he acknowledged this had yet to be addressed, hypothesizing that an individual unit's culture also influences the decision to join:

I don't know that I've ever, hardly ever, asked that kind of question. We've asked the questions before about how many times a person may or may not have been incarcerated. But I've never really sat down and really tried to examine whether they did or they didn't the first time or the second time. *And the only reason I could see that they may not have is they may not have been on a facility where the gang activity was to the point to where they felt like [it was] necessary to do that. A lot of State Jails or State Jail offenders, perhaps, are not on facilities that, personally, want to join a group. And they may get out of the state jail and come by for something worse and have more time to do. And they may find that they will join the second time around.* But I've never really examined that information to determine an accurate response for that. It's a good question, though (personal communication, January 4, 2012).²⁶²

²⁶² State Jail facilities house State Jail felons who, according to TDCJ's public Web site, have been convicted of "[c]ertain offenses (primarily property crimes and low-level controlled substance offenses) committed after September 1, 1994." The sentence "involves a mandatory term of community supervision, in some cases preceded by 60 to 365 days of 'up-front' confinement in a state jail facility. Confinement for the full term of a sentence may be ordered if the conditions of community supervision are violated." The sentence for a State Jail offender "cannot exceed two years for one offense[;]" however, a "repeat offender may receive overlapping state jail sentences

If the system can maximize safety post-GRAD, can it create safety pre-GRAD to minimize the susceptibility to being recruited?

The Offender's Perspective

Although beyond the scope of this research, interviewing past and present GRAD offenders to gain their perspective on the process would be of considerable value. Researchers can observe the changes in physical appearance over time, and document changes in behavior toward GRAD peers and interactions with officers and instructors, but the process is about the offender. Even an abbreviated sequel to the STGMO's earlier interviews with past GRAD completers, as mentioned in Chapter 3, to see how they were handling life in general population and what aspects of the process they found most useful (or even unnecessary) would complement those of security staff, teachers and counselors.²⁶³

Further Qualitative Studies of GRAD Groups

For the researcher who wants to witness offender transformation unfold during and after GRAD, he or she may follow a select group of Ramsey or Ellis

not to exceed three years" (See TDCJ's Web site: <http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/definitions/index.html>).

²⁶³ To assist in monitoring GRAD completers once they leave TDCJ, perhaps each could be handed a card pre-release from the system to either take a follow-up secure, online survey about their involvement with GRAD, the classes, etc., or offer them a card with no identifying information other than the STGMO phone number and a request to anonymously contact TDCJ to tell them how they are handling life on the outside.

Unit offenders from their first day in Phase I to their final walk across the stage at their completion ceremony to their placement in their safety or transition unit.

Choosing another tradition of qualitative inquiry may also be considered. For example, one could undertake a phenomenological study to examine a single phenomenon, such as how do GRAD offenders (or even staff) experience the process? What is it *really* like for those involved? And, although time-intensive, one might opt for an ethnographic approach to study the “meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of [a] culture-sharing group” (Creswell, 1998, p. 58). Immersing oneself in the “day-to-day lives” (Creswell, 1998, p. 58) of a group of GRAD offenders – or even security staff and instructors – as they progress from phase to phase might yield rich data on the transmission of norms and the emergence of a GRAD culture anomalous to the greater prison culture.

Officer Transformation and GRAD’s Potential Lingering Effects

As Officers L.K. and B.D. shared in Chapter 5, being involved in GRAD has altered the way in which they interact with the offenders; the GRAD culture permits them to be both enforcers and helpers. A deeper examination of the sustained effects of GRAD on correctional officers and their personal and professional transformations might generate ideas about the potential to transform the culture of the keepers. Following up with GRAD officers who eventually accept new security assignments outside of GRAD could shed light on the resocialization effects of working in the GRAD bubble – and assess if they

are temporary and GRAD-specific, or permanent and indicative of internalizing new professional cultural norms.

Just as one STGMO official spoke of his desire to overpopulate units with GRAD completers, can TDCJ eventually overpopulate those same units with officers who have cycled through the GRAD process? What effect might that have on the established prison culture and the relationships between offenders and security staff?

THE FUTURE IS NOW: PRISON, CARTELS AND GRAD

Clearly a partnership, however tenuous and opportunistic, exists among the Mexican drug cartels, street gangs and prison gangs, but a thorough examination of the violence and its impact was beyond the scope of the present study. The violence is no longer on the horizon but already here, and its impact should be the focus of future research, especially at it relates to Texas prisons and potentially on the GRAD process. If not already a reality, the possibility remains for cartel members and associates to infiltrate certain STGs and further change the dynamic of gangs and the prison culture. Will the ties gangsters have with cartel associates through neighborhood and familial connections lead to greater prison gang recruitment, especially of those who have yet to go to prison? One law enforcement officer predicted what the prison population would look like in the next several years:

The majority of your offenders are still going to be, probably, first and foremost, Hispanic and Black, again, with the fastest growing population

being the Hispanic population, and the immigration issues, the fast immigration trends that are happening as we speak. Ultimately, I would say they are going to be predominantly Hispanic, younger, violent....You're talking 10 years from now, [Hispanic gangs] probably will double almost by then, I would say....That's still going to be the fastest growing gang population, is probably going to be Hispanics...Mexican [i.e., Mexican national and Mexican-American], Central American. But more so Mexican than anything (I.C., personal communication, September 26, 2011).

Officer R.C. at the Ramsey Unit agreed that TDCJ will be dealing with “newer gangs that are coming from other countries” and specified the introduction of “drug cartels” (personal communication, January 6, 2012).

One of these days, perhaps years from now, if the Texas prison system does witness an influx of Mexican drug cartel-related offenders, and if they decide to join some of the established STGs, how might that impact GRAD in the future? Former cartel “sicarios,” or hitmen, who became active and then former STG members upon renunciation would present another challenge – how to extract not only the STG culture, but also a narco-trafficking culture, where decapitation and dismemberment, and bodies liquefied in acid baths, are standard practice for dealing with rivals and handling disagreements. And if these offenders have little or no family support or other outside support system in place, why would they even want to renounce? Without the prison gang, who will replenish their inmate trust funds and get them what they need while in prison?

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

With approximately 2,600 offenders completing GRAD through February 2012, and with a confirmed STG population holding steady for the last several years at almost 9,000 members (or 6% of the total TDCJ population), the situation, according to Ms. T.G. in the STGMO, is like a “hamster on a wheel” (personal communication, January 4, 2012). It is unknown how many currently active STG members are accounted for in the roughly 70,000 men and women released annually from Texas prisons, or how many are represented in the 1,313 released directly from segregation in Fiscal Year 2010, but for those who find themselves discharged without any transitional phase from segregation to population – and then to the free world – one can only hope they learn to “do people” and quickly.

As social workers, we often work with mandated clients in the criminal justice system who are “feared because they are not understood.” Having a realistic and thorough understanding of the world of prison gangs, beyond television and caricature, and not approaching that world naively, are prerequisites if we are to encourage their personal transformation and maintain accountability. As a former California Mexican Mafia member stated, “Clearly, I don’t possess a cure for [gang proliferation], but what I can do is offer [you] an insider’s view into a prison and criminal subculture that should scare the hell out of the public” (Blatchford, 2008, p. xiv). It is a subculture flanked by other

subcultures. Learn about their worlds, as they will learn about ours. As Mr. A.P. in the STGMO advises,

I think anybody that wants to become involved in any topic needs to learn both sides of the topic to be able to make a justifiable decision, whether it's you or I or a legislator, an administrator, a voter. If you're going to be involved on one side of an issue, then it's only responsible to know what both sides of the issue are... (personal communication, January 4, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Sometimes the only answers are more questions.

If the goal of GRAD is to prepare formerly-segregated offenders for life in the general prison population and to make them “indistinguishable” from other inmates even if they continue to “[do] their little hustle like everyone does” (C.G., personal communication, January 11, 2012), is the process still a success if the prison culture cannot be taken out of the prisoner? If they are completely stripped of their desire to live by the convict code, then have they been done a disservice to their chances of survival – survival not as a former gang member in population (as respondents noted physical safety inside the walls was less of an issue than I had originally thought), but as a general offender in population?

It is indeed possible to effect change in thought and behavior within the safe and structured GRAD milieu, as this study indicates, and perhaps to continue the resocialization process in general population if placed in an environment where, according to counselor F.W., “you actually can practice being anybody you want to be”:

There's a lot of units like [Ellis] that's open to where...the prejudice is minimized. In other words, if you want to be a Christian, it's all right. If you want to go to church, it's all right. If you want to do whatever you want to do, it's all right. There's not a lot of pressure on you....You can practice being a good citizen in prison if you want to do it (personal communication, January 10, 2012).

As long as GRAD completers remain in prison, will they constantly have to “code-switch” (Anderson, 1999, p. 36) to accommodate every possible situation and negotiate every peer interaction? Even with practice, how long does it take to internalize new norms, values and beliefs? The GRAD process can only do so much, as an STGMO official pointed out:

As long as they're here within TDC, we can control that. But once they hit the streets, I don't care how many GRAD classes they went through. If they want to go back to the gang life, there's nothing we can do about that (T.G., personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Is resocialization considered effective if it has a shelf-life?

A FINAL THOUGHT

More than 45 years ago, Stanley Milgram (1965) concluded: “In certain circumstances it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he is placed that determines his actions” (p. 72). An STGMO official modified this: “A person will do better in a better environment only because it's the natural thing to do” (P.F., personal communication, January 18, 2007). In the supportive and nurturing environment of GRAD, offenders learn to “do better” because that is what the environment – and expectations – demand. As stated in Chapter 2, prisoners learn to accept the “repress[ive] and harsh

control” strategies of prison management (Haney, 2006, p. 201) as business-as-usual. But within the GRAD culture, at least within this nine-month protective bubble where offenders and staff “all grow up together” (F.W., personal communication, January 2012), offenders learn that it is never too late for one to “do better” – because if one changes the environment, then one changes the response.

Appendix A: Texas Department of Criminal Justice Security Threat Group-Related Chronology

1848 – Texas Legislature passes an act to establish a penitentiary (Handbook of Texas Online, 2001).

1849 – First prison in Texas in the Texas Prison System is established and the first prisoner, a horse thief, is admitted to the Huntsville Unit in Huntsville, Texas, on October 1st (Handbook of Texas Online, 2001).²⁶⁴

1913 – Adult probation system is established (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission: Self evaluation report”).

1926 – Texas Prison Board is established to oversee the prison system (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission”).

1936 – The Board of Pardons and Paroles is created, and the Texas governor is granted the “authority...to recommend paroles and acts of executive clemency” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 7).

1957 – The prison system formally becomes known as the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC) (Texas Archival Resources Online). The Parole Division is established, and the Legislature appropriates funds to hire parole officers to supervise released offenders (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission”).

1969 – The Windham School District is created (Windham School District, 2011, “Annual performance report 2009-2010”).

1972 – In June, inmate David Ruiz files his handwritten petition while incarcerated at the Wynne Unit, alleging brutal and inhumane conditions while he was assigned to the Eastham Unit in Lovelady, Texas. TDC Director George Beto resigns on September 1st and W.J. Estelle, Jr., is appointed Director. TDC operates 14 prisons and supervises approximately 15,000 inmates (Martin & Ekland-Olson, 1987).

²⁶⁴ According to Perkinson (2010), the first inmate was a “farmer sentenced to three years for cattle theft” (p. 76).

1973 – The Texas House passes the “Building Tender Bill,” which “prohibits use of inmates in positions with supervisory and disciplinary authority over other inmates” (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987, pp. xxiv-xxv).

1974 – In April, Judge William Wayne Justice, the U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Texas, “consolidate[s] six...prisoner petitions with Ruiz’s original petition” (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987, p. 93). Texas inmates form the Texas Syndicate within the California Department of Corrections (CDC) to protect themselves from California inmates who prey on the outsiders. The prison gang is exported to Texas when its members are released from CDC and ultimately end up serving time in TDC for subsequent offenses.

1978 – In October, the *Ruiz* trial begins (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987).

1980 – Judge Justice issues his opinion on *Ruiz v. Estelle* on December 10th (Martin & Eklund-Olson, 1987). Among other violations enumerated in the original petition, the building tender system is to be dismantled.

1982 – Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upholds Judge Justice’s finding that conditions in the Texas prison system do indeed constitute cruel and unusual punishment; “however, the Appellate Court reverse[s] some of the more specific remedial measures ordered by Judge Justice” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 7).

1983 – A constitutional amendment “remove[s] the governor from the parole process” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 7).

TDC’s Bureau of Classification and Records (now known as the Classification and Records Department) implements a computerized tracking system to monitor incidents among organized groups of inmates. Prison gang-related information compiled at individual facilities is sent to and maintained by Classification and Records.

1984 – In March, Raymond Procnier is named as TDC Executive Director (Reynolds, 2004). Twenty-five homicides and 404 stabbings are documented in TDC (Associated Press, 1985, “Prison gangs want peace treaty”); twenty-one of them are classified as gang-related. The total TDC inmate population is approximately 39,000. TDC estimates approximately 1,300 prison gang members in the system (Reynolds, 2004).

1985 – Twenty-seven homicides are documented in TDC, including eight homicides within a ten-day period (Reynolds, 2004); twenty-five are classified as

gang-related. Approximately 3,700 inmate assaults-on-staff are documented. The total TDC inmate population is approximately 37,000.

June 1985 – TDC Director Proconier resigns and Lane McCotter is appointed as the new prison director (Press, 1986; Reynolds, 2004).

September 1985 – Under the direction of Lane McCotter, TDC begins segregating identified prison gang members from the rest of the inmates (Associated Press, 1985, “Prison gangs want peace treaty”) and implements agency policy to confine all validated Security Threat Group members in administrative segregation.

February 1986 – TDC implements a system-wide lockdown and admits it has “lost control” of the gang problem (S.B., personal communication, January 19, 2007). A sharp decline from previous years, inmate homicides totaled five in 1986 (Perkinson, 2010).

January 1987 – At the request of Governor William P. Clements, Lane McCotter resigns as TDC Director (Reynolds, 2004).

March 1987 – James Lynaugh is named as TDC Director (Reynolds, 2004).

1989 – House Bill 2335 passes in the 71st Legislative Session and changes the “Texas Department of Corrections” to the “Texas Department of Criminal Justice,” effective September 1st. The “Board of Pardons and Paroles” becomes the “Parole Division,” the “Institutional Division” is to be known as the “Correctional Institutions Division,” and the “Adult Probation Commission” is renamed the “Community Justice Assistance Division (CJAD)” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission”). House Bill 2335 also creates the Texas Board of Criminal Justice to oversee the prison system (Texas Archival Resources Online).

1992 – “The *Ruiz* Final Judgment...allow[s] the TDCJ to be governed by Departmental policies and procedures” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 8).

1993 – The State Jail Division is created (Texas Archival Resources Online).

September 1993 – James Lynaugh resigns as TDCJ Director (Reynolds, 2004).

April 1994 – James “Andy” Collins is named as TDCJ Director (Reynolds, 2004).

January 1996 – Wayne Scott is selected as the new TDCJ Director (Reynolds, 2004).

1996 – In March, Texas Attorney General Dan Morales files a “Motion to Terminate the 1992 *Ruiz* Final Judgment...[, and, a month later,] Congress enact[s] the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA)” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 8).

October 1996 – The Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) is established within TDCJ’s Classification and Records Department to monitor and track all prison gang activity within the Texas prison system.

1997 – The Rehabilitation and Reentry Programs Division (then known as the Programs and Services Division) was created during the 75th Texas Legislature “to administer rehabilitation and reentry programs” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 9).

1999 – On March 1st, Judge Justice issues another 167-page opinion “finding that the TDCJ violated the 8th Amendment in three respects: excessive use of force, conditions in administrative segregation, and failure to protect vulnerable inmates. The opinion found that the system is not unconstitutional, though deficient, in the area of health and psychiatric care” (TDCJ, 2005, “Report to the Texas sunset commission,” p. 9).

2000 – The Gang Renouncement and Disassociation (GRAD) process begins at the Ramsey Unit (formerly the Ramsey I Unit) in Rosharon, Texas, with its first group of 16 offenders who have renounced their gang membership and embark on the nine-month process to transfer from administrative segregation to the general prison population.

Spring 2001 – The Safe Prisons Program is enacted during the 77th Texas Legislative Session (Reynolds, 2004).

June 2001 – Gary Johnson is named as TDCJ Director upon Wayne Scott’s retirement (Reynolds, 2004).

June 2002 – Per Judge Justice’s order, TDCJ is removed from federal oversight (Renaud, 2002, p. xxii).

April 2004 – STGMO Director, Salvador “Sammy” Buentello, resigns amid allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace (Ward, 2004, “Former prison official indicted”).

November 12, 2005 – David Ruiz, age 63, dies of natural causes at a TDCJ medical facility in Galveston (Perkinson, 2010; Ward, 2005, “Plaintiff in long-running prison lawsuit dies”).

March 2006 – Salvador “Sammy” Buentello pleads guilty to five misdemeanor counts of official oppression and one felony count of unlawful restraint. He is given five years deferred adjudication probation (McGonigle, 2007).

2007 – No gang-related homicides are committed within the prison system; however, TDCJ documents 78 serious staff assaults (i.e., required more than first aid) and 1,095 serious offender assaults. The TDCJ inmate population is approximately 156,000.

January 2008 – TDCJ plans to expand the GRAD process beyond the Ramsey Unit to accommodate hundreds of prison gang members who have formally renounced their membership and successfully completed the Disassociation Investigation for admission to GRAD.

October 27, 2008 – The GRAD process opens at the Ellis Unit in Huntsville and accepts its first group of offenders.

August 2009 – The “Rehabilitation and Reentry Division” was renamed the “Rehabilitation Programs Division” and works in conjunction with the newly-formed “Reentry and Reintegration Division” (TDCJ, 2009, “New TDCJ division focused on offenders’ transition to society”).

October 13, 2009 – Judge William Wayne Justice, serving as a U.S. district judge in Austin, Texas, dies at the age of 89 (Gamino, 2009).

September 2012 – Ten homicides have been reported in TDCJ so far this year, earning 2012 the dubious distinction of being “the deadliest year in more than a decade in Texas prisons” (Graczyk, 2012, “2012 shaping up as deadly year”). It is unknown how many, if any, were STG-related. TDCJ’s Inspector General explained that “[m]ore than half...were committed in cells and involved altercations between cellmates...” (Graczyk, 2012, “2012 shaping up as deadly year”).

Appendix B: Overview of Major Prisonization and Resocialization Studies Cited

	Contribution	About the study	Model of inmate behavior suggested or explained, if applicable
Clemmer (1940)	<p>Introduced the term “prisonization”</p> <p>Prisonization influenced by the length of time served / exposure to prison life influences the degree of prisonization or assimilation into prison culture and prison community</p>	<p>Descriptive case study of the culture of prison in the 1930s</p> <p>(Clemmer was Director of the Washington, DC, Department of Corrections)</p>	
Sykes (1958)	<p>Characterized “prison as a society within a society” (p. xxx)</p> <p>Examined prison as an entity unto itself (although prisons differ, the same processes govern the internal social structure), looking at prison from the inside</p> <p>Culture and individual behavior are derived from the situation (in this case, imprisonment)</p>	<p>Exploratory study of prison as a social system</p> <p>New Jersey State Maximum Security Prison in Trenton, NJ, with approximately 1,200 male adult offenders</p>	Deprivation

Galtung (1958)	<p>Examined the social functions of prison</p> <p>Concluded that prison cannot satisfactorily provide for all the reasons it was intended (i.e., social function of prison is to create constraints, including physical, biological and normative), and the "ideal" is a prison "that is a kind of continuous role-playing session, with some of the varieties and irregularities of real social life built into it" (p. 139).</p>	<p>Participant observations in Norwegian prison (350 inmates), as Galtung served a six-month sentence as a "conscientious objector" (p. 127)</p> <p>Upon release, interviews were conducted with 35 prisoners and 20 guards, questionnaires given to 30 guards, and lengthy interviews conducted with prison officials</p>	
Goffman (1961)	<p>Inmates arrive with their own established culture, but upon admission, they are robbed of any identity, as the institution must contain and control the activities of large numbers of people</p> <p>Analyzes life in a "total institution"</p>	<p>Collection of essays whose focus is on patients in mental hospitals (primarily from the author's fieldwork at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC)</p>	Deprivation
Wheeler (1961)	<p>Prisonization influenced by the length of time served in prison AND the amount of time remaining in the sentence prior to release influence degree of socialization into</p>	<p>Empirical test of Clemmer's prisonization processes to gauge changes in inmate behavior as they near release from prison</p> <p>Questionnaire given</p>	

	<p>prison culture (length of time served in prison and length of time left on sentence prior to release)</p> <p>Looked at the different stages in an inmate's "institutional career" (p. 697) and how prisonization effects vary at each stage – that is, "length of time <i>remaining</i> to be served may be the most crucial temporal aspect" (p. 698)</p>	to 237 male offenders	
Irwin & Cressey (1962)	<p>Introduced the Importation model of inmate misconduct – inmates bring, or import, their criminal values and beliefs with them to prison</p> <p>Criminal subculture exists by which inmates live their lives differently from others, regardless of setting</p>		Importation
Garabedian (1963)	Degree of prisonization is not solely dependent upon time served or time remaining; rather " <i>point of heaviest impact</i> varies with the	Data collected from maximum security prison in an unnamed Western state (random sample of 380 inmates and 141 staff members who	

	<p>different role types” (p. 151);²⁶⁵</p> <p>“Impact” was determined by time and classified into three categories based on time served: (1) early phase (fewer than six months); (2) middle phase (more than six months with more than six months remaining); and (3) end phase (fewer than six months remaining in sentence)</p>	<p>“were asked to evaluate a series of five contrived situations referring to life in prison” [pp. 140-141] used to determine “conformity to staff norms among inmates in the three career phases”)</p>	
Fischer & Geiger (1991)	<p>Sought to answer the question, “To what extent does the <i>kibbutz</i> change the offender?” (<i>kibbutz</i> as a “total and closed system”)</p>	<p>Interviews with 26 offenders in early 20s and their “adoptive parents” on <i>kibbutzim</i> in Israel</p> <p>Noted several limitations to the study: self-selection; non-random selection or assignment (offenders were placed in <i>kibbutzim</i>)</p>	

²⁶⁵ Garabedian identified five social roles inmates assume: (1) “square Johns” (not well-versed in the criminal lifestyle, often had minimal criminal involvement prior to incarceration, partake in prison programming, and “identify with conventional norms” [p. 143]); (2) “right guys” (more extensive juvenile and adult criminal histories, have minimal contact with prison staff, and are not engaged in prison programming); (3) “politicians” (more likely to have been involved in “relatively sophisticated crimes [that required] manipulating the victim by skill and wit” [p. 143], are involved in prison programming, and maintain contact with other inmates and correctional staff); (4) “outlaws” (tend to engage in more violent crimes, and maintain their distance from other inmates and staff); and (5) “dings” (the catch-all for inmates who, due to their “lack [of] consistency and reliability” [p. 144] in behavior, do not fit into the other categories).

		prior to study); also had to be recommended for the program by prison social worker and rehabilitation committee (potential for creaming only those offenders most likely to succeed)	
Hunt, Riegel, Morales & Waldorf (1993)	Neither Importation nor Deprivation models adequately explain inmate behavior, but rather “other dynamics of prison life” (p. 398), such as the introduction of newer and younger inmates (the “Pepsi Generation”), gang formation and overcrowding, led to changes in prison culture	Data collected from interviews with a sample of ex-prisoners in California	Integrated
Hochstetler & DeLisi (2005)	Examined the “importation of offender characteristics into prison, their effects on prison life, and...on prison offending” (p. 258)	Data collected from 208 male parolees residing in work-release facilities in Midwestern state and had been released from prison six months prior to participating in the study and completing surveys (measured self-control, risk-taking, criminal attitudes, participating in the inmate economy,	Integrated/Lifestyle-Exposure

		<p>offending behavior while incarcerated (i.e., engage in assaults, retaliation, or weapons offenses), witness victimization, and perceived prison environment (i.e., focus on tolerance for the noise, boredom and lack of privacy while incarcerated)</p> <p>Found participation in the inmate economy as the strongest predictor of offending (witness victimization was strongly correlated with participation in the inmate economy as well)</p>	
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Appendix C: Review Board and Data Collection Timeline

January 23, 2011 – Submitted a formal written request to the Deputy Director of Management Operations, who oversees the STGMO and can approve access to GRAD facilities, for a Letter of Support that would acknowledge researcher's intent and interest in collecting the data, interviewing staff, and gaining access to Ramsey and Ellis Units and the STGMO, pending all necessary approvals from the University of Texas's (UT) and TDCJ's review boards.

July 25, 2011 – Received Letter of Support from TDCJ.

July 26, 2011 – IRB Application and Letter of Support submitted to UT for expedited review.

August 25, 2011 – UT IRB Expedited Approval granted for Protocol # 2011-07-0068 and expires on August 24, 2012 (also inadvertently listed as Protocol # 2010-07-0068 on the Approved Consent Forms).

August 29, 2011 – Research Project Application submitted to TDCJ-Executive Services.

September 2011 – Conducted interviews with law enforcement.

November 22, 2011 – TDCJ-Executive Services approved the study.

November 23, 2011 – Received Letter of Approval and Research Agreement from TDCJ-Executive Services for researcher's signature.

November 26, 2011 – Returned completed aforementioned documents to TDCJ-Executive Services.

November 30, 2011 – TDCJ provided STGMO contact in order to arrange staff interviews.

December 1, 2011 – TDCJ provided contacts at Ramsey and Ellis Units in order to schedule visits for interviews.

January 4, 2012 – Conducted interviews with STGMO staff at the BOT Complex in Huntsville.

January 5-6, 2012 – Conducted interviews with GRAD staff at the Ramsey Unit in Rosharon.

January 10-11, 2012 – Conducted interviews with GRAD staff at the Ellis Unit in Huntsville.

February 18, 2012 – Submitted UT IRB Amendment to reflect funding secured from the Austin Police Association for the cost of transcription services.

February 20, 2012 – Submitted Progress Report to TDCJ-Executive Services.

March 12, 2012 – Consulted with TDCJ-Executive Services for clarification on aggregate-level data requested in the Research Project Application.

March 29, 2012 – Began receiving data from TDCJ-Executive Services.

July 31, 2012 – Submitted UT IRB Continuing Review Request.

August 10, 2012 – Received final data request from TDCJ-Executive Services.

August 21, 2012 – Submitted 6-Month Progress Report to TDCJ.

Appendix D: UT IRB Approval Letter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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Date: 08/26/11

PI(s): **Michelle L Burman** Department & Mail Code: **Social Work, School of**

Title: **Resocializing and Repairing Homies within the Texas Prison System: A Case Study on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang Renunciation and Safety for All**

IRB EXPEDITED APPROVAL: IRB Protocol # 2011-07-0068

Dear: **Michelle L Burman**

In accordance with the Federal Regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above referenced research study and found it met the requirements for approval under the Expedited category noted below for the following period of time: **08/25/2011 - 08/24/2012**. Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.

Expedited category of approval:

- ☐ (1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.
- ☐ (2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children², considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.
- ☐ (3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by Non-invasive means. Examples:
(a) hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner;
(b) deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
(c) permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
(d) excreta and external secretions (including sweat).

- (e) uncannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue;
 - (f) placenta removed at delivery;
 - (g) amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;
 - (h) supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the Process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;
 - (i) mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings;
 - (j) sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.
- ☐ (4) Collection of data through noninvasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications).
Examples:
(a) physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy;
(b) weighing or testing sensory acuity;
(c) magnetic resonance imaging;
(d) electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography;
(e) moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.
- ☐ (5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis). (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).
- ☐ (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
- ☒ (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).
- ☒ Use the attached approved informed consent.
- ☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Documentation of Consent according to 45 CFR 46.117 and/or 21 CFR 56.109(c)(1).
- ☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Informed Consent according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems.

2. Ensure the proposed changes in the approved research during the IRB approval period will not be applied without IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. Changes in approved research implemented without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject must be promptly reported to the IRB, and will be reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the subjects continued welfare.
3. Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to participate.
4. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
5. Use only a currently approved consent form (remember that approval periods are for 12 months or less).
6. Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects and their information.
7. Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s) prior to the implementation of the change.
8. Submit a Continuing Review Application for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year (a Continuing Review Application and a reminder letter will be sent to you two months before your expiration date). If a reminder is not received from Office of Research Support (ORS) about your upcoming continuing review, it is still the primary responsibility of the Principal Investigator not to conduct research activities on or after the expiration date. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.
9. Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.
10. Include the IRB study number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

If you have any questions call or contact the ORS (Mail Code A3200) or via e-mail at orsec@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,



Jody L. Jensen, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix E: TDCJ Research Project Approval Letter

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



Brad
Livingston
Executive Director

November 23, 2011

Dear Ms. Burman:

TDCJ - Executive Services has completed its final review of your research project and has concluded your research project has met all the necessary requirements for approval. You may officially start your data collection process once you have signed and returned the "*Research Agreement*" enclosed in this packet. Also enclosed is a copy of the "Accessing Premises: Compliance with Agency Policies and Procedures." The Texas Department of Criminal Justice project number for your research application titled "*Resocializing and Repairing Homies within the Texas Prison System: A Case Study on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang Renunciation and Safety for All*" is "639-AR11". Please use this project number when referring to your TDCJ project in the future.

As stated in the "Research Agreement," please remember our office requests:

- A progress report after the first three months, and every six months thereafter. Your first progress report is due **February 22, 2012**. You are responsible for reporting on time.
- A copy of the IRB approval (and yearly renewed approval) letter, proposal, and any information submitted to the IRB for proposal revisions, unanticipated risk or adverse drug reactions, renewal etc.
- Submission of the results of your studies for review and comment prior to publication/presentation. Please allow thirty (30) working days for this process. In addition, two final copies of any reports generated from the research project shall be provided to TDCJ - Executive Services (dissertation, thesis, academic article, report, etc.). Finally, all publications produced from TDCJ research projects **must** contain the following disclaimer:

"The research contained in this document was coordinated in part by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Research Agreement #639-AR11). The contents of this report reflect the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice."

I advise that you carefully review the "Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Research Agreement" and "Accessing Premises: Compliance with Agency Policies and Procedures" due to some recent policy revisions. If you have questions, please contact Susan DeBose at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

Karen Hall, Manager III
TDCJ – Executive Support

Enclosure: "Research Agreement" Original: to be signed and returned
 "Accessing Premises: Compliance with Agency Policies and Procedures " Copy

Appendix F: Letter for Informed Consent for TDCJ Staff

Title: A Case Study on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang Renunciation and Safety for All

IRB PROTOCOL #: 2011-07-0068

Conducted By: Michelle Burman, Doctoral Candidate

Of The University of Texas at Austin: School of Social Work

E-mail:

Faculty Sponsor: Michael Lauderdale, Ph.D., School of Social Work

Telephone:

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin or participating sites. To do so, simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to examine the management of gang members and gang activity within the prison setting in order to learn how corrections professionals view and respond to the gang problem. You were selected as a potential participant because your professional responsibilities involve the identification of and/or frequent interactions with gang members in prison. A total of approximately ten (10) subjects will be interviewed for this study.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- You will be interviewed at least once at your convenience (via telephone, e-mail and/or in person). You will be asked questions concerning your views on the ways in which prison systems respond to prison gangs and how prison gang members who have voluntarily chosen to leave their gang fare once released from both Administrative Segregation and prison itself. An outline of tentative points of discussion will be provided for your review.

Total estimated time to participate in this study is one hour.

Risks of being in the study:

- The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life.

Benefits of being in the study:

- Participation will allow you the opportunity to voice your opinions on a topic you know intimately. The interview will grant you an opportunity to be heard and your ideas to be presented.

Compensation:

- Participants will not be financially compensated for being in the study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.
- If you are willing, the interview may be audio-taped. However, the tape will be made only to help the interviewer remember everything that you said. It will be safeguarded under lock and key and will be erased after it has been transcribed and coded. The information you provide will remain confidential and will only be used when your identity is protected. Toward that end, every precaution will be taken to protect your identity. Your name, rank and other identifying information will not be disclosed or included in the final research; you will be given an alias in the final study wherever comments are attributed to you. Tapes will also be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. They will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and her associates.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to orssc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX, 78713.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Investigator:_____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Letter for Informed Consent for Law Enforcement Officers

Title: A Case Study on Security Threat Group Management, Administrative Segregation, Prison Gang Renunciation and Safety for All
IRB PROTOCOL #: 2011-07-0068

Conducted By: Michelle Burman, Doctoral Candidate

Of The University of Texas at Austin: School of Social Work

E-mail:

Faculty Sponsor: Michael Lauderdale, Ph.D., School of Social Work

Telephone:

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin or participating sites. To do so, simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to examine the management of gang members and gang activity within the prison setting in order to learn how corrections professionals view and respond to the gang problem. You were selected as a potential participant because (1) your professional responsibilities involve the identification and investigation of prison gang members who have been released from the correctional setting into the free world; and (2) through the course of your professional duties, you have been in contact with prison gang members who have voluntarily chosen to leave their gangs. A total of approximately ten (10) subjects will be interviewed for this study.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- You will be interviewed at least once at your convenience (via telephone, e-mail and/or in person). You will be asked questions concerning your views on the ways in which prison systems respond to prison gangs and how prison gang members who have voluntarily chosen to leave their gang fare once released from prison. An outline of tentative points of discussion will be provided for your review.

Total estimated time to participate in this study is one hour.

Risks of being in the study:

- The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life.

Benefits of being in the study:

- Participation will allow you the opportunity to voice your opinions on a topic you know intimately. The interview will grant you an opportunity to be heard and your ideas to be

presented.

Compensation:

- Participants will not be financially compensated for being in the study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.
- If you are willing, the interview may be audio-taped. However, the tape will be made only to help the interviewer remember everything that you said. It will be safeguarded under lock and key and will be erased after it has been transcribed and coded. The information you provide will remain confidential and will only be used when your identity is protected. Toward that end, every precaution will be taken to protect your identity. Your name, rank and other identifying information will not be disclosed or included in the final research; you will be given an alias in the final study wherever comments are attributed to you. Tapes will also be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. They will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and her associates.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX, 78713.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____

Date: _____

Appendix H: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for Law Enforcement Officers

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you worked in the criminal justice / law enforcement field?
How long have you been a law enforcement officer?
2. How long have you worked in the identification and investigation of gangs (in your current and previous professional employment, if applicable)?
3. In the course of your regular job duties, how often do you interact with gang-involved (prison or street) individuals?

Gang Renunciation

1. How familiar are you with TDCJ's GRAD process?
2. What have you heard other law enforcement officers say about gang renunciation programs like GRAD?
3. In your opinion, what should the goals of prison gang renunciation be?
4. Tell me about your experiences interacting with individuals (in the free world) who have completed the GRAD process during their time in TDCJ.

Viewpoints Beyond Renunciation

1. What are the main issues law enforcement will have to deal with regarding prison gangs in the coming years?

Appendix I: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Counselors and Teachers

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been a teacher (or counselor)?
2. How long have you been working for TDCJ (Windham School District)? What other positions, if any, have you had while working for this agency?
3. How long have you worked with the inmate population? With prison gang members?
4. How long have you worked with GRAD and GRAD offenders?
5. How did you decide to work with GRAD and GRAD offenders?
6. How aware are you of their gang histories? That is, do you know which gangs they once belonged to when they enter the classroom?

GRAD Goals and Curriculum

1. In your opinion, what is GRAD trying to do? What are its goals?
2. How do you define the “success” or “effectiveness” of GRAD?
3. What reasons have you heard offenders give for their decision to renounce?
4. Tell me about the curriculum you use for GRAD.
5. Are there differences in the curriculum to prepare those GRAD offenders returning to general population vs. the free world? What kind of preparation is offered for those who will be paroled upon release from GRAD?
6. Describe some of the activities you incorporate in the classroom to demonstrate the concepts.
7. What changes have you seen in the offenders’ attitudes from the first time you’ve met until the end?
8. What changes have you seen in their behavior from the first time you’ve met until the end?
9. What changes have you seen in their interactions with their GRAD peers?

10. What changes have you seen in their interactions with the correctional staff?
11. What changes have you seen in their attitudes toward correctional staff?
12. Have you ever had an offender whom you thought was not sincere in his renunciation? How did you respond?
13. What differences, if any, have you noticed between the younger and older offenders in the groups?
14. What differences, if any, have you noticed between the different races and ethnicities of offenders in the groups?
15. What makes an offender successful in GRAD? After he completes GRAD?
16. What role does your relationship with the offenders play in changing their behavior and attitudes?

Working with Correctional Staff

1. Describe your professional working relationship with GRAD correctional staff.
2. How do you think your goals in GRAD differ from or are similar to those of the correctional staff?

Viewpoints on the GRAD Process and Beyond

1. If applicable, what have you heard from GRAD completers about how they view the GRAD and renunciation experience? How do they view their return to general population?
2. If you could change anything about the GRAD process, anything at all, what would it be? Who should it target? At what stage in the process should it be implemented?

Appendix J: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Correctional Staff

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been a correctional officer?
2. How long have you been working for TDCJ? What other positions, if any, have you had while working for this agency?
3. How long have you worked with the inmate population? With prison gang members?
4. How long have you worked with GRAD and GRAD offenders?
5. How did you decide to work with GRAD and GRAD offenders?

GRAD Goals

1. In your opinion, what is GRAD trying to do? What are its goals?
2. How do you define the “success” or “effectiveness” of GRAD?

Gang Involvement, Renunciation and the GRAD Process

1. What reasons have you heard offenders give for why they joined a prison gang in the first place? And for those who did not join during their first period of incarceration, what reasons do they give for joining once they returned for a subsequent sentence?
2. What reasons have you heard offenders give for their decision to renounce?
3. What do you see as the incentives GRAD offers offenders (in addition to being released from Ad Seg)? What do you think offenders see as the most important incentives for going through GRAD?
4. Based on your experience, what is the difference between those STG members who opt to renounce vs. those who do not? Have you noticed differences based on their rank in the gang? Age? Number of years spent in Ad Seg?
5. During your time assigned to GRAD, what changes have you seen in the types of offenders participating in GRAD (for example, are the GRAD

offenders older or younger than when you first began working in GRAD; have they spent more or less time in segregation prior to renouncing; do they have a documented history of violence in prison; etc.)?

6. What changes have you seen in the offenders' attitudes from the first time you've met them until the end of GRAD?
7. What changes have you seen in their behavior from the first time you've met them until the end of GRAD?
8. What changes have you seen in their interactions with their GRAD peers?
9. What changes have you seen in their interactions with the correctional staff?
10. What changes have you seen in their attitudes toward correctional staff?
11. Have you ever had an offender whom you thought was not sincere in his renunciation? How did you respond?
12. What differences, if any, have you noticed between the younger and older offenders in the groups?
13. What differences, if any, have you noticed between the different races and ethnicities of offenders in the groups?
14. What makes an offender successful in GRAD? After he completes GRAD?
15. For those offenders who have voluntarily dropped out of GRAD (either during the two-year investigation or during the nine-month process), what reasons have they given for doing so?
16. For those offenders who have been removed from GRAD non-voluntarily, what reasons have been given?
17. Have you observed any differences among the various STGs in completing the process? Are some STGs more likely to complete the process than others? If so, why do you think that is?

18. What role does your relationship with the offenders play in changing their behavior and attitudes?
19. What have you heard other correctional officers who are not involved with GRAD say about the renunciation process?
20. What have you heard other correctional officers say about those officers who work in GRAD?
21. How do you think administration and staff view those offenders who complete the program?
22. What do you think the implementation of a process like GRAD says about how TDCJ views and deals with the gang problem?

Completing GRAD and Returning to the General Population

1. What have you heard from GRAD completers (or those in Phase III who are back in general population) about how they view the GRAD process? How do they view their return to general population? Have they discussed what aspects of the process they liked or disliked? Have they offered suggestions for potential changes to the process?
2. How does the system maximize the safety of GRAD completers once they are back in the general population?

Working with Counselors and Teachers

1. Describe your professional working relationship with GRAD counselors and teachers.
2. How do you think your goals in GRAD differ from or are similar to those of the counselors and teachers?

Viewpoints on the GRAD Process and Beyond

1. What do you see as obstacles, if any, to the success and expansion of a process like GRAD?
2. If you could change anything about the GRAD process, anything at all, what would it be? Who should it target? At what stage in the process should it be implemented?
3. What are you starting to see in prison regarding gangs? What do you see as the main issues TDCJ will have to deal with regarding gangs in the coming years?

Appendix K: Interview Topics and Sample Questions for TDCJ Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO)

Introductory Questions

1. How long have you been working for TDCJ? Prior to being assigned to STGMO, what other positions, if any, have you had while working for this agency?
2. How long have you worked with prison gangs?
3. How long have you worked with GRAD and GRAD offenders?

The Emergence of STGs and Prison Gang Violence

1. In your opinion, how much prison violence is attributed to STGs vs. non-gang members?
2. How does the agency classify prison gang violence? If a member is involved (perpetrator or victim)? If the act is done in furtherance of the gang? Other?
3. How do the various STGs focus their recruitment efforts? What are the differences, if any, among the groups based on race or ethnicity?
4. How can TDCJ identify and target those offenders who are more susceptible to being recruited by a prison gang to prevent them from joining?

Managing STGs through Administrative Segregation

1. What are your views on the use of Ad Seg to manage STGs?
2. How has the policy of segregating STG members affected the prison gang problem?
3. How do you view the use of Ad Seg as a tool to manage STGs?
4. What do you see as the consequences (positive and negative) of segregating STG members from the general population?
5. What does the review process entail for a non-STG member placed in Ad Seg? How does such an offender typically get released from Ad Seg?
6. What does the review process entail for an STG member placed in Ad Seg? How does such an offender typically get released from Ad Seg?

GRAD Goals

1. In your opinion, what is GRAD trying to do? What are its goals?
2. How do you define the “success” or “effectiveness” of GRAD?

Gang Involvement, Renunciation and the GRAD Process

1. What reasons have you heard offenders give for why they joined a prison gang in the first place? And for those who did not join during their first period of incarceration, what reasons do they give for joining once they returned for a subsequent sentence?
2. What reasons have you heard offenders give for their decision to renounce?
3. What do you see as the incentives GRAD offers offenders (in addition to being released from Ad Seg)? What do you think offenders see as the most important incentives for going through GRAD?
4. Based on your experience, what is the difference between those STG members who opt to renounce vs. those who do not? Have you noticed differences based on their rank in the gang? Age? Number of years spent in Ad Seg?
5. During your time assigned to STGMO, what changes have you seen in the types of offenders participating in GRAD (for example, are the GRAD offenders older or younger than when you first began working in GRAD; have they spent more or less time in segregation prior to renouncing; do they have a documented history of violence in prison; etc.)?
6. What is GRAD’s target population? Offenders with long sentences, those with nearer projected release dates, first-come-first-serve, etc.? Once they have completed the two-year investigation and placed on a waiting list, how are they selected to participate?
7. For offenders successfully completing the two-year investigation, what can they do while waiting to enter GRAD?
8. For those offenders who have voluntarily dropped out of GRAD (either during the two-year investigation or during the nine-month process), what reasons have they given for doing so?

9. For those offenders who have been removed from GRAD non-voluntarily, what reasons have been given?
10. If an offender is removed from GRAD for any reason, will he have an opportunity to participate in the future? (Will he be placed back on the waiting list? Will he have to undergo another two -year investigation, or does that depend on the reason for his removal?)
11. Have you observed any differences among the various STGs in completing the process? Are some STGs more likely to complete the process than others? If so, why do you think that is?
12. How do you think administration and staff view those offenders who complete the program?
13. What do you think the implementation of a process like GRAD says about how TDCJ views and deals with the gang problem?

Completing GRAD and Returning to the General Population

1. What have you heard from GRAD completers (or those in Phase III who are back in general population) about how they view the GRAD process? How do they view their return to general population? Have they discussed what aspects of the process they liked or disliked? Have they offered suggestions for potential changes to the process?
2. How does the system maximize the safety of GRAD completers once they are back in the general population?

Options for Those STG Members Unable to Participate in GRAD

1. How does TDCJ handle STG members whose status precludes them from participating in GRAD but still want to renounce (that is, offenders who previously have taken hostages in prison, are considered escape risks, etc.)?
2. What is available to prison gang members who are not in segregation yet want to renounce?

Upon Release from GRAD to the General Population

1. To what type of facilities are GRAD completers sent? What factors determine where he will be sent for this next stage of his incarceration?

2. What opportunities are available for GRAD completers once they return to general population? Educational, therapeutic or vocational opportunities? Changes in classification?
3. What type of audit procedure is in place to track GRAD completers while they remain in prison? What about when they are released on parole?

Viewpoints on the GRAD Process and Beyond

1. What do you see as obstacles, if any, to the success and expansion of a process like GRAD?
2. If you could change anything about the GRAD process, anything at all, what would it be? Who should it target? At what stage in the process should it be implemented?
3. What are you starting to see in prison regarding gangs? What do you see as the main issues TDCJ will have to deal with regarding gangs in the coming years?

Appendix L: Matrix with Research Questions and Sources of Evidence

Research Question	Sources of Evidence					
	Documentation	Archival Records	Interviews	Direct Observations	Participant-Observation	Physical Artifacts
<p>What are TDCJ's measures for "effectiveness" and how does it define "success" for GRAD? What are its goals for offenders who complete the GRAD process (i.e., No recidivism? No major disciplinary infractions once returned to the general population? A commitment to remaining gang-free in prison and the free world)?</p> <p>Based on what is known about prison resocialization, prison culture, gang culture and prison gangs, as well as general theory and findings with regard to socialization, would a process like GRAD even be expected to be effective?</p>	X ²⁶⁶	X ²⁶⁷	X			
		X ²⁶⁸	X	X ²⁶⁹	X ²⁷⁰	

²⁶⁶ Documentation includes "administrative documents" (Yin, 2003, p. 86), such as TDCJ's mission statement, its *Offender Orientation Handbook* (2004), annual reports, and other publicly available publications. Newspaper and journal articles and other open source records about TDCJ, the GRAD process and prison gangs can and have been reviewed.

²⁶⁷ Earlier conversations and interviews incorporated into the dissertation are considered archival records and will be used as such.

²⁶⁸ This includes extant data that is neither offender- nor staff-specific, including, but not limited to, the following categories: Administrative Segregation, Security Threat Groups, Security Threat

Are there differences between the types of prison gang members who choose to renounce and those who opt to continue a life in administrative segregation as prison gang members?						
How do the views and perceptions of correctional staff regarding a prison gang member's ability or inability to "repair" himself mitigate the potential success of the GRAD process in the immediate and long-term? How does prison administration view the process of change and resocialization based on their perceptions of prison gangs, and how does this impact the process and its potential for expansion, support and longevity?	X	X ²⁷¹	X	X		X ²⁷²

Groups and GRAD offenders, and reintegration from GRAD to the general population. Earlier interviews incorporated into the dissertation are considered archival records and will be used as such.

²⁶⁹ This includes observation of GRAD completion ceremonies and GRAD classes.

²⁷⁰ This includes observation of GRAD offenders, completion ceremonies and classes, and informal interactions with GRAD staff and offenders while on the units.

²⁷¹ Earlier conversations and interviews incorporated into the dissertation are considered archival records and will be used as such.

²⁷² According to Yin (2003), "a work of art" (p. 96) also provides context and depth of meaning. The GRAD process, through its curricula and the vision of its teachers and counselors, has incorporated several art projects, group and individual, grand and small, to illustrate the concepts. These may allude to the "success and effectiveness" of the process by revealing the degree to which each offender has internalized the concepts presented in class.

Appendix M: Case Study Protocol to Increase Reliability

- Overview and Introduction to the Case Study
 - Background information about the project and its purpose (include setting)
 - Relevant readings
 - Case study questions and hypotheses
 - Theoretical framework
 - Policy implications
- Data collection and field procedures
 - Security Threat Group Management Office and prison facilities to visit (Ramsey and Ellis Units), including contact persons to be interviewed
 - Data collection plan (dates of visits, estimated length of visit, use of digital voice recorder, meeting place, etc.)
 - Schedule for data collection to include time frame and deadlines
 - Contingency plan for interviewees who opt out after initial agreement to participate
 - Preparation prior to visits
- Report outline
- Case study questions
 - List main topics for interview questions for each 'type' of participant
 - TDCJ personnel (STGMO staff, correctional staff at Ramsey and Ellis Units, and counselors/teachers)
 - Law enforcement
 - List sources of evidence/data collection for each question
 - Levels of questions (see Yin, 2003, p. 74)
 - Level 1: Specific questions to ask interviewees
 - Level 2: What the researcher seeks to understand and answer with the case study
 - Letter for informed consent

Adapted from "Case Study Protocol" in R.K. Yin's *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd ed.), 2003, pp. 67-69.

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